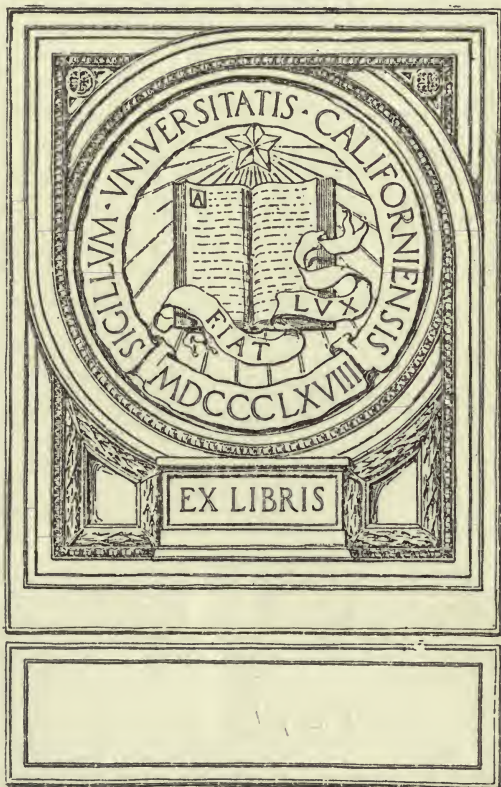
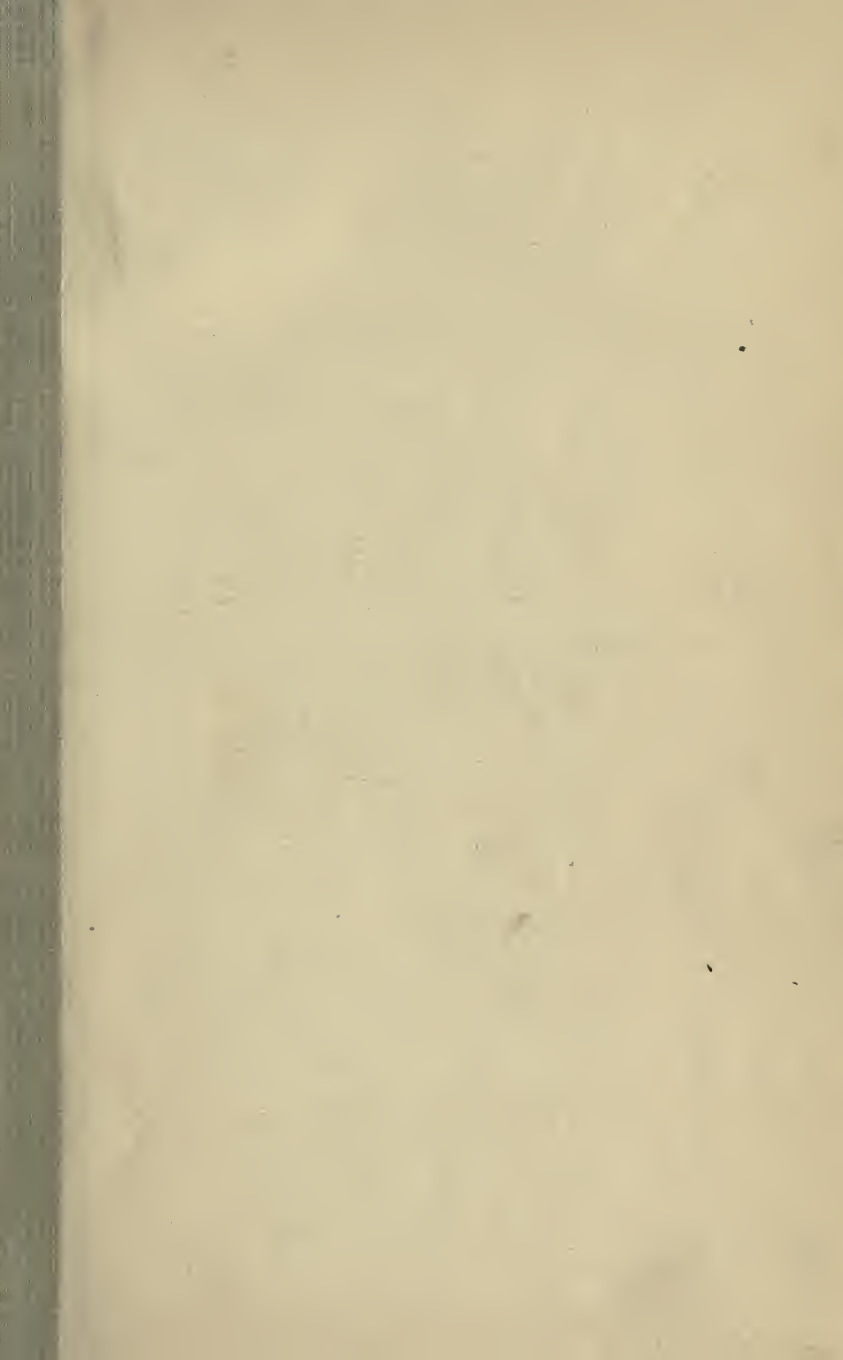
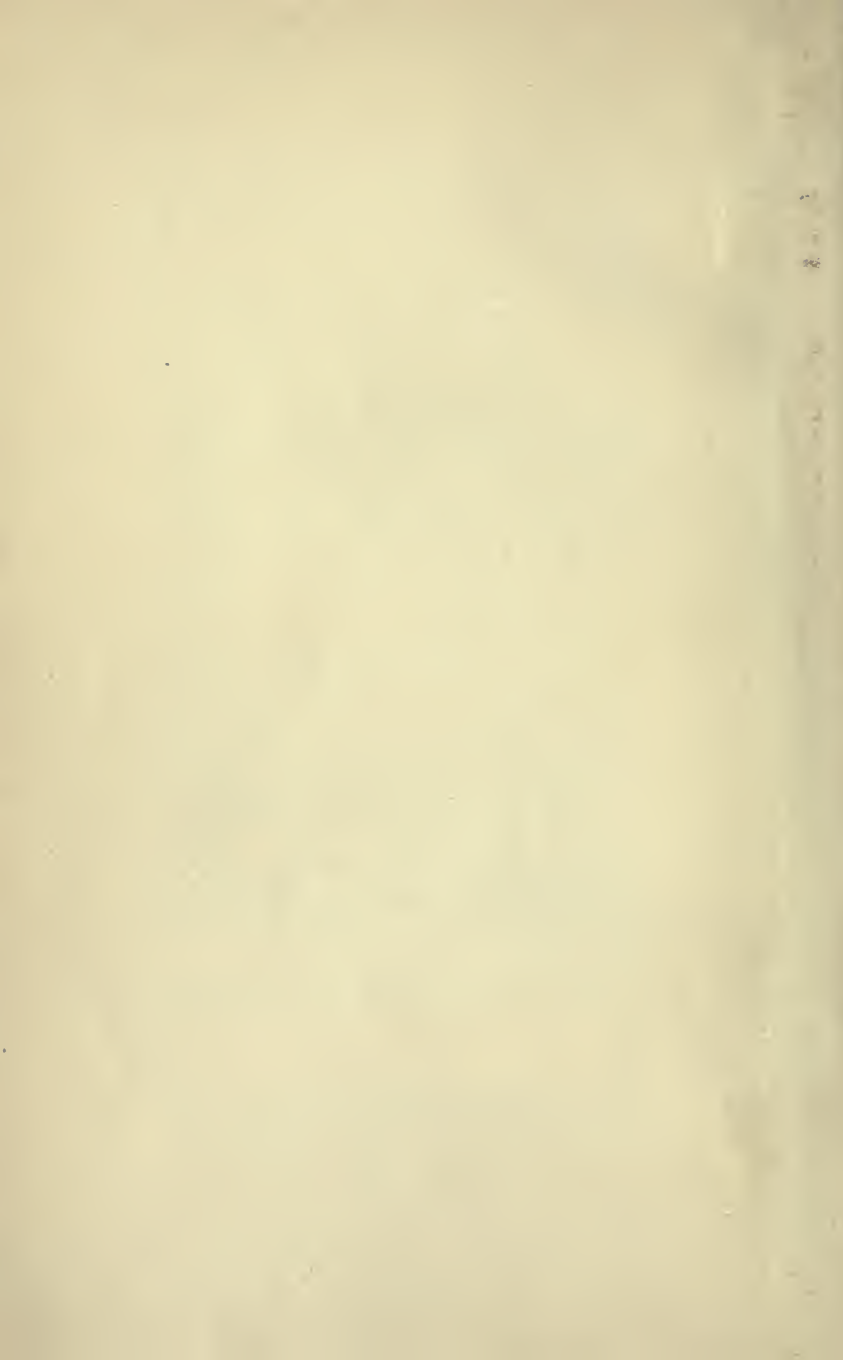




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HORACE W. CARPENTIER







KAMI-NO-MICHI
THE WAY OF THE GODS
IN JAPAN



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HARUNA.

Frontispiece.]

KAMI-NO-MICHI
THE WAY OF THE GODS
IN JAPAN

BY
HOPE HUNTLY



LONDON
REBMAN LIMITED
129 SHAFTESBURY AVENUE, W.C.
1910

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Argentine

70. 1900
1900. 1900

DEDICATED
TO
ALL ASPIRING SOULS!

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ERRATA.

Page 214, line 1, for "English" poet read "Persian" poet.

Page 67, line 9 from bottom, for "Hara-Kiri" read "Hari-Kiri."

Page 274, line 8 from top,	ditto	ditto
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Page 277, lines 4-5 from top,	ditto	ditto
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Page 278, line 5 from bottom,	ditto	ditto
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Page 286, line 6 from bottom,	ditto	ditto
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TABLE

The following table shows the number of persons who have been admitted to the various departments of the University of Cambridge, from the year 1800 to 1850, inclusive.		
Year	Arts	Divinity
1800	10	5
1810	15	10
1820	20	15
1830	25	20
1840	30	25
1850	35	30

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

THE desire of the author is to guide her readers faithfully along this time-honoured, half-obliterated "Way of the Gods," clearing the path with reverent, not iconoclastic hands, because recognising it as the Way by which the Japanese were divinely led to their present mental altitude. The path is traced in threefold aspect—Ethical, Philosophical, and Romantic.

The story trends towards a sensational crisis in order to emphasise life-portraits known to the author while resident in the country.

To do this more effectually she presents the characters in the setting of their own harmonious environment, every scene of which she has personally explored.

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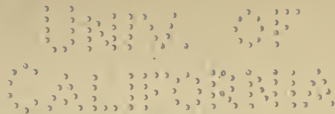
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KAMI-NO-MICHI

THE WAY OF THE GODS

IN JAPAN



CHAPTER I

THE WAY OF LOVERS IN JAPAN

FAR away in sunny Japan, out-distancing the beaten track of globe-trotters, flourishes an isolated grove of camphor trees.

They are magnificent specimens, so closely grown that the smooth trunks, towering skyward, interlace the higher branches, affording mosaic glimpses of persistent blue.

Here may be discovered, though totally eclipsed from view, a primitive Shintō shrine!

No one would surmise the fact of the hidden temple, for even the Torii, or open gateway,

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that leads to it, is completely enveloped with foliage. On the outskirts, the feathery branches of some bamboo trees, fan the bronze water of a sheltered pool, and here, on stated festivals, a few weary pilgrims may be found, cleansing the soil of travel from lips and hands, before venturing to penetrate the sacred precincts.

The sunny afternoon had been preluded by days of persistent rain, rain that came down like wire, as Japanese rain can ; consequently the odour of the camphor trees rose through the air, an ascending stream of incense that ceased not night and day. The only sign of human life that emerged occasionally from within the grove was the form of a white-robed priest.

Carrying the food-offering, he would cross the intervening glade to place it reverently within the Shinsenjo, a compartment set aside for that purpose.

In the foreground the figures of a young man and maiden were prominent. They were dressed in the time-honoured costume called *kimono*, and had finished laving their mouths and hands in the clear water of the pool.

The sunshine illumined two happy faces, the faces of those who were recently betrothed. The girl was beautiful physically, with the beauty which is accentuated by harmony of voice and expression.

"I always knew this day would come," she said, in the resonant tones of her native tongue. As she spoke she dashed some sparkling drops of water from her hair, replacing the kerchief, with which she dried her supple fingers, in the sleeve of her kimono, which also served the purposes of a pocket.

There was a ring of unalloyed happiness in the laugh that followed her action. Her eyes, tantalisingly secreted, were pent-up jewels, that glittered with joy, while her dainty lips parted expectantly, like the petals of a crimson Lotus bud. She roused no echo of merriment in response. Her companion gazed on her complacently with eyes full of assured love, but his demeanour was more serious than seemed warranted by the happy occasion.

"How could you always *know*, Zuri?"

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he questioned, and his voice was unusually subdued.

“How did I always know?” she repeated chidingly. “You have surely not forgotten our childish vow that we made so solemnly to the Roku Jizō?”

The *Roku* were six baby images of the God Jizō, to whose guardianship the souls of dead children are consigned.

“Do you not remember,” she went on, “how we implored Jizō to protect the soul of my little sister, and shelter it in his sleeve, vowing, if he did so, we would wed when we were grown, and serve him the rest of our lives? Ah! I see now the little bag full of pebbles that we hung round his neck, and then how hard we toiled to build up the pyramids of penance, so that the soul of my sister Asaka should have less to do in the Sai-no-Hawara.¹ Did we not know that every pebble given to Jizō with a prayer from the heart is a blessing to an infant soul? Is it possible you have forgotten all this, Ito?”

¹ That portion of Hades where the children go.

Ito smiled, and there were symptoms of patronising forbearance in his expression.

"You have a tenacious memory, Zuri," he said ; "only the big earthquake we experienced that year remains rooted in mine."

"Why, Ito," she responded reproachfully, "do you not recollect that even the earthquake failed to destroy our tower? Other mounds were in ruin round it, but not one pebble of our pile was displaced. By this I knew that Jizō had received our petition ; so it only remains for us now to fulfil our vow and serve him faithfully the rest of our lives."

Ito made no reply. His troubled look deepened almost to gloom. He evidently disliked allusion to this incident, for he caught Zuri by the hand and hastened her short steps.

In physique the young man was most striking—handsome for his race, with a strongly knit figure replete with energy, making up in bearing what some might deem it lacked in height.

"Come now," he said decisively ; "the present must obliterate the past if we would make good

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progress in the future. Come, let us hasten to leave our usual offering at the shrine, and be gone."

A little sigh, as if a whiff of cloud had obscured the blue of the girl's heaven, was her sole remonstrance. It quickly passed, for did she not understand the reticent nature of the man she loved, then he was surely so much wiser : had he not spent two years in Canada, returning so Europeanised she scarcely knew him till he resumed his national clothes ?

Politics were a passion to Ito San ; he was a fervent Progressionist with great ability for adaptation of languages.

In the veins of both the racial blood ran pure, but in worldly possessions they were poor. Zuri San was an orphan, living alone in her small timber homestead. Her ancestors had been Daimyōs in the past—and her noble father had taken his own life for reasons which her world held in honour, while death had withdrawn behind the veil the infant sister with whom she had been left motherless.

Ito had made great sacrifices and also accepted them from his parents for the honourable accomplishment of a collegiate career, first at Tokyō, and finally at Toronto. He came back with honours and distinctions that made Zuri glow with triumph, but he chafed against the knowledge that he was a poor man for the eventual realisation of his aims.

He had inured himself to extreme physical hardship, and was unrivalled in the School of Juzitsu—a splendid specimen of Japanese, such as ancient training and the persistent avoidance of dead-flesh diet alone could produce.

At present a tempting offer was being dangled before the ambitious eyes of Ito San—an offer with which he could only close at a certain cost.

He had not breathed a word of it to Zuri, some premonition warning him to keep it from her until his decision was irrevocable.

In spite of his advanced views Ito, like many another cultivated Japanese, left due deference to the opinion of a woman, out of count. There

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was still a traditional inclination in him to relegate her to a secondary sphere.

Although in sympathy with European "form," he did not yet regard woman as the equal of man, nor did he realise any need to readjust such views. With the heavy burden of evil "Christian civilisation" has imported into Japan, will be added eventually this good—the re-establishment of woman in her inherited position, shoulder to shoulder with the masculine complement to her sex.

Ito had practically formed his decision in regard to the pending offer, and although this half-remorseful premonition of its effect on Zuri depressed him, he was fully resolved not to be swayed by her opinion. Now, however, in the flush of this joy of reunion, the spell of love restrained him too forcefully to subject it to any strain at present.

The sweet trill of the *Uguisu* (nightingale) vibrated through the evening breeze, and was with them till they entered the majestic grove of camphor trees. Passing between these, they

penetrated as far as the *Mizu-gaki*, or fourth fence, that formed an almost perfect square of palisade in front of the shrine.

Here their advance was arrested by a pure white linen curtain which completely shielded the Honden, or innermost shrine, from view.

Our betrothed, after removing their *zōri* (sandals), kneeled down, throwing their offerings of money on the ground till the coins rolled away and lay with many others at the hem of the curtain; they next repeated a short prayer, clapping their hands twice together, after it was finished, to arrest the attention of the invisible powers. Ito was turning away when Zuri laid her hand on his arm.

"Ito," she said softly, her face growing pale, till it resembled a delicate cameo in the waning light, "it was here that Viscount Mori, the foreigner, dared to raise the curtain and pry within, for which impious act he was struck with death by the gods. My father was present and witnessed the deed."

"Not by the gods," corrected Ito, "say rather

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by the rank fanatic priest Nishino Buntarō, who dared to sacrifice the life of the viscount for such a trifling offence."

Zuri turned a glance of troubled surprise on her lover. "Ito," she said, "unsay your words; how could it be a trifling offence to desecrate the shrine? True, I think not the gods demanded his life, but do not incur their displeasure by making light of the deed. Often," she added with lowered tone, "when my inner soul-senses quicken, I see the forms and faces of our gods pass to and fro between these trees!"

Ito suppressed a sarcastic reply that rose to his lips, and with an abrupt gesture drew Zuri farther away from the shrine, but not before the girl had noticed his expression of contempt.

Then once again that little cloud, swollen somewhat larger now, obscured the blue of her deep happiness.

CHAPTER II

THE WAY OF LOVERS IN ENGLAND

“So you are determined to throw me over for a whim—an infatuation—a ‘call,’ as you are pleased to term it! It is well for this missionary friend of yours that he *is* your friend, otherwise I would go out to Japan to-morrow on purpose to wring his neck!”

The scene was a house in Park Lane, and the speaker an English embodiment of energy.

Lionel Trevor was creating a medical career in the midst of the tense competition that reigns in our Metropolis, but he bid fair by dogged perseverance as well as personal capacity to make it a remarkable one. The girl he addressed was his senior by nearly two years—pleasingly though sturdily formed, with enthusiastic and searching brown eyes.

There was plenty of resolution in the curve of her chin, which was at present firmly set upon her hand, supported by her elbow on the table. The hand was too broad for the hand of a "womanly" woman, perhaps; but it was thoroughly practical, the fingers being strongly spatulated and giving signs of self-reliance if not of obstinacy. In spite of these indications, a close observer would have noticed that only a determined exercise of will kept these bright eyes from brimming with tears. On the table between the lovers, for lovers these two were, lay the sign-manual of such relationship—an engagement-ring.

"You may mock at my friends as much as you please. I cannot expect you to do otherwise, Lionel, considering your rationalistic views. I have foreseen I should have to go through all this."

"A fine lot you must have cared for a fellow, to think for a moment of undergoing this separation!"

The strong voice trembled somewhat, then the speaker rallied and added—

“Come, come, Pauline! Own up that the idea cannot be entertained—and let me put the ring on again.”

She turned her head aside to avoid meeting his honest grey eyes, lest she should be moved by their pleading. “Whoso putteth his hand to the plough and looketh back”—was a text that suddenly usurped supremacy over her literal mind, and fettered it, as she mentally added the concluding clause. She knew it was useless to give utterance to it.

“Well then,” he went on, “if go you must, at least do so engaged to me, and give a fellow some sort of prospect to live on till you come back again.”

Pauline was silent, for in truth it needed all the Scripture quotations she could summon, torn from their context, to enable her to withstand this “temptation.”

“No, Lionel! I will go to Japan free!” at length she affirmed doggedly. “I will never

consent to keep you bound indefinitely. Who knows whether I shall be able to leave the work, when started, to come back again ? ”

The young surgeon began to feel his self-command deserting him, and rising he paced the room, as is the way of wrathful man in order to preserve it.

“ Then all I can say is, I wish to heaven the Church and every red-hot parson suckled by it were drowned in the profoundest depths of the sea ! I have no patience with this fellow Thompson, who is such a saintly hero in your eyes ! He has thrown up a lucrative living where he could ‘ king it ’ over the ritual to his heart’s content, because, forsooth, his bishop wanted an extra hand to Christianise the Japanese, who undoubtedly will be very much the worse for it. What beats me is, that not content with having dragged out his wife and himself, he must needs whistle you after him.”

“ Mr. Thompson has not influenced me in the least,” said Pauline, who piqued herself upon making her own decisions ; then drawing up her

head stiffly she added, "it was a question to be settled entirely by my own soul—the force of which you cannot understand when you have no belief in its existence."

"But what is to become of *my* poor soul, I should like to know, if I have got one? As far as I can understand, you have received a 'call' to send mine to the devil."

"Do not talk so wildly, Lionel! You know perfectly well I have never had the smallest influence over you on religious questions. We have argued and wrangled over theological difficulties till I am tired of it. You cannot see any farther than your own nose, by which I mean your physical anatomy, though you are clever enough in dissecting that. It is a well-known fact that most doctors are shameless materialists."

"And a good thing it is for humanity that we do see just as far as our own noses lead us," he retaliated, "for at any rate we see straight, and the priest would be a bad substitute for any one of us in the event of a necessary operation."

When once I can catch a glimpse of my soul, Pauline, if it *is* only as much as I can perceive of my nose, I promise I will set about consulting with you how to doctor it ! ”

“ This nonsense is beside the point,” went on Pauline. “ It is better for both of us to be perfectly free. You may possibly see some one far more suitable for the wife of a doctor.”

“ And you may have a chance of securing a missionary ! ”

“ Nonsense ! ” Pauline again exclaimed impatiently. “ You know, Lionel, I am not the woman to act in that manner.”

“ Indeed, I am only aware of one bald fact—that you, to use an expressive if commonplace word, have very deliberately jilted me ! Well, you have done your work thoroughly, as far as I am concerned, for you have killed the only invisible thing in which I believed, and that was—your plighted troth to me.”

Saying this—the young man turned abruptly from her, and, hurriedly leaving the room, re-entered it no more.

Pauline sat motionless a while as if stunned with a result she had intended and expected, yet now it had come her vaunted strength evaporated suddenly. Snatching up the discarded ring of pearls and emeralds, she pressed it to her lips, and then fled away to the privacy of her own room.

There, after locking herself in securely, she fell upon her knees before a crucifix of inlaid ivory that had witnessed all her joys and struggles, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

The sacrifice was self-imposed, the act exceedingly ill-advised, and yet this girl had acted bravely up to the highest light she recognised : she had made her " great renunciation," though none but the Master knew.

CHAPTER III

HER FIRST JAPANESE CONVERT

THROUGH the death of her father, Pauline Erskine had inherited the portion of income allotted to her.

She left a querulous mother who, amply provided with this world's goods, preferred the companionship of an unmarried sister to that of her daughter ; therefore the girl felt justified in obeying the dictates of a tyrannical conscience that can best be described as bristling with theological prejudices, and booked her berth for Japan.

For several years, dating back to early girlhood, Pauline had conceived a peremptory call to go forth and Christianise the " Land of the Rising Sun."

She never could have explained why she fixed

on Japan, and she did not become mistress of her actions until after her engagement of marriage had been formed. This was apparently so suitable, that it delighted all her friends.

Pauline was nothing if not intense. Her opinions were convictions, and her orthodoxy absolutely uncompromising. For some time she had seen reason to doubt the stability of the views of her fiancé, if he had any, on religious questions. He had refused to declare himself in favour of Apostolic Succession—abjured the Athanasian creed—and dispensed with certain other doctrinal punctilios. Pauline, therefore, to the chagrin of her family, threw him over, or, as she expressed it to herself, sacrificed her own affections on a point of principle.

This lapse of marriage was a loss to the girl : she had certain aggressive angles and crude outlines of character that a happy marriage would have subdued and refined, harmonising them with other traits that were undeniably noble.

The charm of a life-comrade, not “like to

like " but " like to difference," did not appeal to her. She was very sure the marriage would have proved a mistake, and that she had found her destined vocation.

If her heart pleaded to the contrary, as indeed it did very often, Pauline was involuntarily the more inclined to plume herself on the sacrifice involved ; at least, she had not offered to her Lord " that which had cost her nothing."

The English mission she had joined was a very energetic one. It was distributed in branches over Japan, and was well supported by wealthy European merchants. There was no lack of trained teachers, though they were those whose minds had been scrupulously confined to collegiate grooves. Each one was an earnest and indefatigable student of the Japanese language, so was Pauline, though when she landed in the country she found that in spite of her intimate acquaintance with its construction none but the highly cultured were able to understand her.

To digest the grammar of a new language does not ensure success with it colloquially ! Pauline

was therefore compelled to have recourse to an interpreter, and meeting Ito San at the house of a mutual acquaintance, had been gratified by an offer from him of his services when she held her classes. This became the basis of friendship between them, and Pauline soon began to build certain aspirations on the result.

The girl yearned for her first convert with as much ardour as a young sportsman might desire his first pheasant, or a rising barrister his brief. She scented fair game in the soul of Ito San, and resolved to stalk it cautiously.

Ito was too courteous by nature not to allow the English lady to believe, when he saw how it gratified her, that he was affected by her arguments.

As a matter of fact they did not weigh with him at all. To his mind, quasi-Europeanised as it was, and steeped in modern scepticism, all religions simply constituted the scaffolding erected by priests to enable them to acquire authority. He had no special predilection for one of them. If he still adhered to the outward observances his own faith demanded, it was but an external

conformity to satisfy his parents, who were fervent *Shintōists*.

Pauline's arguments therefore fell upon an open mind ; but as soon as Ito began to suspect that the Christian religion would advantage him materially, he became as ready to adopt it as he was, on occasion, an English dress-suit !

It chanced that an influential compatriot, one of the ministers of the Imperial Government, discussed with Ito San the advantages to be derived from the post of tutor, at present vacant in a family of the English aristocracy ; his friend also offered, in the event of his consent, to propose him for the appointment. Religion appeared to present the only obstacle. Lord Ingram, though fully satisfied with the credentials of the young *Samurai*, had pre-determined that the chosen tutor for his son must be a professor of the Christian religion : on this point he was inexorable. This decided Ito ; the appointment was too advantageous every way to be resisted, also the emolument proposed was on so generous a scale he felt it would enable him to hasten

the next cherished ambition—his marriage with O Zuri San. It was after the final interview at Tokyō with Lord Ingram had taken place that Ito lent a willing ear to Pauline's earnest instruction, in the end allowing her, with the exaggeration of Japanese politeness, to take the entire credit for his somewhat sudden conversion.

Pauline would have been deeply mortified could she have known the actual cause for his rapid awakening to the truth she so strenuously inculcated. The fact was unfortunately hidden from her, and no more exultant apostle ever existed than Pauline Erskine when her first convert avouched himself ready and eager to receive baptism according to the rites of the English Church.

Pauline had met the beautiful betrothed of Ito San, and she felt no doubt in her own mind that the gentle Japanese girl would follow meekly in the footsteps of her future husband into whatever untrodden paths his honoured feet might lead.

CHAPTER IV

A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ENTERTAINS

WHEN Kojima San and his wife gave a dinner-party in Japanese style, it was counted a privilege by Europeans to be numbered among their guests.

The host was a noted leader of Progressionists in the Japanese House of Representatives, and his home was often the resort of eminent politicians of the hour. His entertainments were never crowded, which made them so much the more enjoyable. When Pauline, by means of an introduction through our Ambassador, received an invitation, it was with a keen premonition of interest that she rode in her *rikisha* through an avenue—the Kojimas had illuminated with coloured lanterns—that led to the threshold of their home.

This timber tenement was not spacious, but was so conveniently adjusted it could have been carried away in instalments for erection elsewhere.

Kojima San emerged from the verandah, accompanied by a throng of smiling servants, to welcome his expected guests, and soft embroidered slippers awaited the feet of the European, in the event of her having been so oblivious of Japanese etiquette as to have retained her leather shoes.

It would have entailed as great a breach of manners to have stamped upon the sofas and chairs of an English home as to have retained the shoes on entering a Japanese dwelling.

The house stood on an eminence in a popular suburb of Tokyō, and commanded an extensive prospect of the straggling streets, or "bazaars," of the city below. The building consisted of two storeys, connected by a short staircase set at so precipitous an angle that it might be more consistently termed a ladder.

Both host and hostess spoke English fluently,

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passing with ease from one language to another, and Pauline was pleased to discover O Zuri and Ito San among the guests, which also included the Minister for Education.

Out of compliment to the lady from England, the portrait of King Edward had been suspended from a beam above the centre of the dinner-table.

The room shone softly with the glow of tiny lanterns, a grateful change, Pauline thought, from the blatant glare of electricity. The centre-piece on the table was a *chef-d'œuvre* of ancient Venetian glass, and there was one other European decoration in the form of a scroll of French tapestry. Otherwise the apartment was very sparingly furnished in accordance with the Japanese dictates of taste that condemn a crowded room as vulgar.

The table was of course a Western innovation, but each guest had the usual square tray of lacquer set before him, to support six or seven dainty dishlets, which were continually being replaced by fresh surprises in the culinary art.

Pauline felt nervous about manipulating her chopsticks, and she barely contrived to assuage the pangs of hunger with the roe of some uncertain fish, served raw, and resembling beetroot in colour.

Bulbs of the Lotus Lily were also consumed, which ought, surely, she thought, to be considered profane eating from a Japanese standpoint. The menu was varied and protracted, and Pauline found a source of refuge in the constant replenishment of her tiny bowls with tea and *saké*.

At present there was considerable excitement in political circles over a Progressionist measure, which had been brought before the House of Representatives. It was one that would, unless its wings were clipped in passing, soar above many restraints ancient custom still imposed on education in Japan. The Minister present was a moderate man, unadvisedly so, in the opinion of his host. In the eyes of the intelligent, his face was redeemed from ugliness by the deep lines earnest thought had engraved upon it.

They had been stamped there by ceaseless mental toil in the interests of his beloved "Nippon."

Japan was profiting through him, by a statesmanship that had been evolved from the régime of the past ; a statesmanship in which personal ambition and place-seeking could not enter the lists, because the man had been bred to sink his individualism. It had been forced to become subservient to everything. First, to the call of his country, next, to interests of his community, and in youth to those of his kindred, whatever might be the cost involved.

At the moment, the Minister was troubled by having reluctantly been compelled to recognise the fact that no such selfless qualities would be engendered by the influence of the proposed measure.

He was disturbed in spirit by foreseeing the extent of moral laxity the liberal schemes he had promoted would involve.

His host, Kojima San, was ruffled by none of these mental qualms. He sprang from a younger

generation, and his training had been leavened with Western aggression.

"Our Bill must be passed this session in spite of the desperate charge of forlorn hopes led by our honourable opponents," he exclaimed.

The Minister smiled serenely. No Japanese, least of all a legislator, carries his innermost convictions on the sleeve of his kimono.

"We are aware," he responded, bowing in the direction of his host, "that the irresistible energy of our fiery leader will leave no stumbling-block in the track that he has power to remove. But suppose the Bill does not pass as it stands at present, it may be for the ultimate advantage of our nation, in which case, in my despicable opinion, personal defeat is of no consequence."

Ito San had been listening to the conversation with flashing eyes—withheld from the expression of his opinion by the consciousness of youth. He was a red-hot partisan in the van of advancement, and the last remark implied a lingering valuation still set on the fetters of the past.

He now said rather abruptly, as if he scorned

the self-depreciation etiquette obliged him to assume—

“ I am but the humble mouse that has set its teeth into the rope that binds the Lion of our national freedom, but I will not loose my hold till the last strand is severed, nor will I ever recognise the possibility of failure.”

The Minister turned towards the speaker, and looked at him with a beneficent smile.

“ So boasts the heated blood of youthful enthusiasm,” he observed quietly. “ Surely, my son, I need not remind the descendant of a *Hatamoto Samurai* of the words uttered by our illustrious thrice-greatest ancestor *Iyeyasu*,” here the speaker bent his head reverently, an action imitated more or less sympathetically by the guests. “ If thou only knowest how to succeed, and hast never learned the higher lesson—how to fail—woe is thee ! ”

The rebuke silenced Ito.

Privately he continually execrated the limitations of the past. If the ancestors were still alive in an invisible sphere, a fact affirmed by

Shintō, which he had long ago ventured to question secretly, well, the sooner they withdrew their numbing touch from modern progress the better for their descendants, according to his conviction.

Looking up, he caught the eye of his hostess, who was smiling amiably upon him and making a diverting observation to cover his retreat.

Zuri was vaguely troubled at the iconoclastic line Ito appeared to wish to pursue since his return from Canada. She averted her eyes, and appeared not to listen, sipping pensively her dainty china bowl of warm saké.

“ Will some one kindly inform me what is the opinion of the Emperor in respect to this disputed measure ? ”

It was Pauline who propounded this question, and she did so in a clear distinct tone that momentarily eclipsed the others. She was proud of the correct Japanese in which she had voiced the question, but was utterly unprepared for the pause of profound astonishment that succeeded her inquiry.

With the ignorance of those who have not

studied the idiosyncrasies of tact that are ingrained in the behaviour of this people, the girl little dreamed she had not only rushed in where angels would not dare to tread, but had expressed an impertinent and even profane inquiry.

The days were not so far distant when the Emperor was too sacred to possess an "opinion," and even now he was too divine to express one openly, while to *quote* him would have been to perpetrate an act of sacrilege unthinkable.

The situation was saved by the Minister.

"The honourable English lady is evidently not aware of the temerity of her question," he observed. "In the case of her own gracious King Edward, *vox Dei* has long since been relegated to the voice of his people. With us in Japan it is otherwise; *vox Dei* is still invested in our Emperor, and can only be interpreted as one interprets Deity—in deferential silence."

His voice was low and reverent, and the company breathed again, but Ito glanced swiftly at Pauline, and she noticed a gleam of humorous sympathy in his eyes.

The girl saw her error promptly, without realising its enormity, and hastened to apologise.

"I beg your pardon. I fear I am far too ready to thrust the English method of free speech everywhere I go. It really was very stupid of me, for now I think of it, none of us really know our own King's personal views on politics. Indeed, I intended no offence."

Then, in the midst of a murmur of polite disclaimer, Kojima San changed the subject by asking Pauline if she had as yet visited Nikkō, the Rome of Japan. "Remember," he added, smiling, "our ancient saying, that no one must use the word magnificent until they have seen Nikkō!"

"No, I have not been there yet, the weather has become too uncertain," was her reply. "I find your beautiful climate very like our own, only more so," she added in English; "by this I mean there are longer spells of shine and rain."

"That is aptly spoken," observed her host. "Apropos of climate, will you permit me, for your guidance in starting future expeditions, to

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render in English, if my weak endeavour may so presume, our Japanese aphorism concerning the periods of rain. First, I must crave your pardon for the abominable manner in which I shall present your noble language. Here is the warning :

“ June ? Too soon !
July ? You may !
August ? You must !
September ? Remember !
October ? All over ! ”

This effusion, given with a charm of depreciatory gesture impossible to describe, was greeted by the Japanese guests as a most brilliant effort to render an impromptu translation in English verse (?) of their own tradition.

When the applause had sufficiently subsided, the hostess gave the signal, and the company rose simultaneously, the gentlemen not lingering in the background, but escorting the ladies into an adjacent apartment.

CHAPTER V

THE DAUGHTER OF THE DAIMYŌ, " DIVINELY FAIR "

THERE could be no doubt that, even in the midst of the fascinating Japanese ladies who were present, O Zuri San was the belle. She was far taller than the generality of her sex, and slender as her graceful name-flower the lily.

Her features were rarely formed, the mouth being exquisitely curved, without that similarity to the lips of a doll which is often so noticeable in regard to this feature among her countrywomen.

Every line of her pliant figure had the indefinable curve of high breeding, and this was specially apparent in the contour of her little ears, and the shape of her feet and hands. Her father had been the last male survivor of a long line of marshal Daimyōs, renowned for loyalty

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since the earliest days of the Shogunate. Every notable of her time knew O Zuri San, and she was petted and beloved by all, in spite of the fact that she was poor, and was glad to turn her musical talent to account by initiating some of the princesses of the Imperial House into the mysteries of the *koto*. That most ancient of all musical instruments, so old that it is said there were traces of its existence in the Days of the Gods, was brought forward on this occasion and placed upon the floor.

It was a cumbersome instrument of wood, amazingly long, and at the request of her hostess Zuri proceeded to cap her taper fingers with ivory shields, preparatory to manipulating the strings.

She made a pretty picture when she sank down on a cushion, the *koto* being stretched before her, and glancing up, with an inquiring smile, requested her listeners to select her theme.

"Give us the favourite ode of the Emperor, honourable lady," requested Kojima San; "the

same you have so often performed in the august presence."

Bowing assent, she commenced to intone a protracted love-tragedy, having informed the guests that its composition dated back a thousand years.

The music was so weird it struck Pauline as most repellent at first, but as she became more accustomed to its rhythm, it grew on her, until at last it carried her mind away, almost against her will, into a bygone sphere where she lost touch with herself as Pauline Erskine, the missionary, and roamed sympathetically in the midst of masked Samurais, deserted virgins, and tyrannical Shoguns.

True appreciation of music must scorn dogmatic limitations that would confine it to race and style, understanding that it depends not only upon these, but more especially on character, experience, and a thousand unrealised idiosyncrasies, common not alone to certain nations, but to an entire humanity.

Pauline understood dimly now a declaration

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Ito San had made to her, that when for the first time he experienced the performance of an European prima-donna, its effect on him mentally was only comparable to the whining and howling of a dog !

The present tragedy was voiced chiefly by the instrument, Zuri occasionally mingling with it plaintive trills of song, resembling the remonstrance and sighs of some suffering spirit who was powerless to control the issue, and yet destined to witness the pain.

Every sound was intricately conceived and fastidiously executed, and however wearying to the uninitiated, left Pauline with a yearning, for which she was foolish enough to despise herself, to hear the whole theme repeated once more. Surely there was depth in it she could not plumb, and heights that she had failed to reach. Later on, three of the lady-guests with "samisens" produced a much livelier measure from their strings. To the imagination of Pauline it conjured forth a host of crickets, dancing a reel, or, to speak more appropriately, reeling

through a dance: their gestures were so provocative of mirth that she was fain to join the audience in laughter, though at a loss to explain the cause.

Zuri and Ito San did not converse often together, and the ways of lovers in Japan were as yet a sealed book to Pauline.

Once, however, she caught sight of a glow of affection and pride on the face of Ito as he exchanged a glance with his betrothed, whose eyes responded with expressive trust. This left her in small doubt after what she had heard concerning the facile nature of Japanese women, that she might hopefully anticipate another case of conversion later on.

When the music ceased, a curious game, or ceremonial, was introduced which is fast becoming extinct. The company subsided by request upon cushions disposed in semicircle, and attendants appeared carrying valuable Satsuma bowls, which were filled with various kinds of rare incense.

These were handed to the guests, who passed

them one to another, after each had applied them to the nose. The object was to ascertain by this means the correct names of the different kinds of incense, the most successful competitor being afterwards presented with a dainty prize, chiefly composed of paper.

The task was by no means easy, as there exist in Japan many hundred varieties of incense, some being composed of the most ancient and costly ingredients, originated in periods, lost in the mists of age. Pauline, though drawn into the testing circle, felt herself quite incompetent to pronounce any opinion. All the bowls when presented to her appeared to smell exactly alike, the gradation of the scents being so subtle, it seemed to her imperceptible.

"I perceive that your inestimable country does not cultivate the olfactory nerve," remarked the Minister, who was seated next to her. "Ah, that is well, as there perhaps remains one thing yet whereby Japan may pleasure England."

Pauline could not repress a smile, nor the inquiry—

“What *is* the use of it ? ”

The Minister seemed surprised in his turn, though he suppressed the expression of it in a bow of courtesy.

“In older days its uses were many and most valuable, honoured lady,” he exclaimed.

“For instance,” added his host, “in time of war it warned us whenever foreigners, though unseen, were approaching.”

Pauline experienced a feeling of revulsion mentally, that was disagreeable to her. Was it possible, she thought, that these barbarians scented us, with as much distaste, as we Europeans experience when landing on the shores of the East ? If so, the tables were indeed being turned unexpectedly.

“We even cultivate this sense to such an extreme,” remarked Ito in a subdued aside to Pauline, as the game proceeded, “that it is believed we can scent the approach of the Tennin *when* they favour us ? ”

“Who are the Tennin ? ” inquired the girl, in renewed perplexity.

"The Tennin, according to Shintō, are the angels," he replied. "They are supposed to carry the aroma of their particular grade of Paradise in the folds of their long feathery tails, which serve the purpose of wings to them. Tennin are always of the sex feminine," Ito added, bowing gallantly; "never has our coarser sex succeeded in evolving into one of them."

The implied mockery of his former religious tenets gratified his listener, it proved to her how successful her work had been, and she honestly gloried in it.

Thus the pleasant and novel evening drew to a close, the hostess terminating it in a graceful complimentary manner by presenting her foreign guest with a cup of tea, mingled with milk, in the English fashion.

Pauline was escorted to her rikisha by a group composed of anxious and ready servers—who kindled the light of the pretty paper lantern fastened to her vehicle, and adjusted her cushions judiciously to ensure her comfort. She was then whirled through the garden of lamps, downwards

into the straggling streets of Tokyō, in and out between its dissecting canals, on which weird fires smouldered in boats, while around her flashed the lights of other rikishas that danced through the city like fire-flies besieging it.

As the girl listened to the soft pad of her swift-footed runners, she felt she was being conveyed into a new world that was gradually expanding around her. It was a world that corresponded more to her dreams than to her wakeful practical common sense, yet it was so real it inspired her with dismay rather than pleasure. Dimly she realised that she was being introduced to some curious phases of Truth that would have been hitherto false in aspect to her even had she discerned them. Yet she could not resist ruminating over them, fascinated, though they were nothing accounted of, in her theology.

CHAPTER VI

BY THE SIDE OF A SOTOBA IN THE HAKABA

ITO adhered to his decision that his betrothed and also his parents must be kept in the dark respecting his change of religion, until his baptism had absolutely confirmed it. He was only too well aware of the pain this desertion of his national faith would cause them, and in his secret consciousness he also knew that he was not making the change because of any newborn devotion to the Western Church, but chiefly because of future material advantages that would ensue from it.

He calculated on marrying before he took up his appointment, and even if separation must necessarily intervene for a time, he relied on his own frugality to uplift Zuri from her present sphere of loneliness and poverty, and

maintain her liberally in a more befitting home.

Thus it will be seen that his motives were not all ignoble, though he was too wary to allow them to become apparent to Pauline Erskine, and still less to the zealous missionary who was preparing him for immediate baptism. The young man realised that these were both too honourable and loyal in the service of their Master to have accepted him as a convert had they the slightest suspicion of his genuine condition of mind. Even in regard to himself he found it necessary continually to renew an inward assurance that as all creeds were equally chimerical it could not signify which of them he openly professed.

The last of the Daimyōs of Matsue—on which island the ruins of their former stronghold can still be seen—was the father of O Zuri San. He had perished by his own hand in deference to the honour he conceived under peculiar circumstances to be due to his Emperor. He was highly venerated for the deed, and a magnificent

iron lantern, inscribed to his memory, had been erected in the court of an imperial temple. His body had been laid in a retired *Hakaba*, or cemetery, in the midst of some very ancient pines, and his daughter Zuri visited the spot periodically. Her father had mingled some Buddhism with his Shintō belief, and had specially appreciated the symbolism associated with a *Sotoba*, which was consequently placed over his grave.

A *sotoba* is a monument shaped like a cube at its base, and the name is derived from a Sanscrit source. A globe is poised on the cube, and this in turn upholds a small pyramid, from which rises a kind of saucer, square as regards its shape, its edges being curved like crescents with tilted corners. The symbols typify earth, water, fire, wind, and ether—the five *substances* by no means to be regarded as “elements,” into which the physical body is dissolved by death. The ancient teaching posits that substance can be so attenuated invisibly that it still remains *Matter*—in a sublimated form.

The other monuments in the *Hakaba* were far less costly—some only consisting of tall spurs of wood with the symbolism impressed on them by means of five deep cuts notched upon the edges.

All had some kind of saucer annexed, in which water could be poured, or sticks of incense left smouldering.

The tomb of the noble Daimyō stood somewhat apart, and bore evidence of reverent care.

The wind was murmuring a Requiem through the magnificent pines surrounding it, some of these being so distorted in shape they resembled the tree-prisons of Dante, in which he pictured the dislocation of certain souls !

On this occasion Zuri might have been seen approaching, looking like an embodiment of unrepulsed Hope. She was dressed in a dove-coloured kimono of cotton-crape, an *obi*, or sash, blue as the sky, encircled her waist, and she held in one hand a tall, spreading branch, gemmed closely with white cherry blooms.

Spring was fast spreading its bridal veil over

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the awakening earth, and in no part of the known world is that veil so white, so pure, and so persistent, during its ephemeral reign, as here in radiant Japan !

Zuri was a daughter who had not only loved but honoured her parents, and there was reverence in the bend of her dainty head as she adroitly balanced her exquisite floral offering in a vase, and placed it on the highest step of the sotoba. She next drew forth a little rod of incense from the sleeve of her kimono, and set it kindling in the cavity of the pedestal, till its pale blue smoke wreathed the monument, cherry blooms, and herself, into the living semblance of a dream.

Presently she unfolded a tiny parcel containing some miniature cakes, and arranging them in order, filled up a bowl with fresh water, and contributed it with the rest. Then when everything was arranged to her liking, she rested a while to contemplate the effect, her body thrown back against her heels, and her hands loosely clasped before her. In this posture she raised her pure face to the branch-screened heavens,

and softly recited her favourite chant to *Kwannon*, Mother of Compassion, which is to be found in the Hokkeyō, or collection, of traditions :

“ O Thou, whose eyes are clear, whose eyes are kind, whose Eyes are full of pity and sweetness—O Thou Lovely One, With thy beautiful face, with Thy beautiful Eyes,— O thou pure One, whose luminosity is without spot, Whose knowledge without shadow,—O Thou Flower Shining like the sun whose glory no power can repel,— Thou Sunlike in the course of Mercy—pour light on the World ! ”¹

Then appealing to her father, she added :

“ O thou noble soul, deign to honour my love by the acceptance of my humble gifts ! and be thou Perfected ! ”

It was in this attitude by pure accident that Pauline Erskine suddenly found her. The Hakabas are not as a rule enclosed, or in any way barred from visitors, therefore it was that, full of interest in this unknown world and drawn on by the glory of the day, she had wandered within the grove.

The English girl was arrested by the artistic

¹ Translation by Lafcadio Hearn, in *Glimpses of Familiar Japan*.

beauty of the scene, and she stood transfixed, longing for the brush of a master-artist, and the power to use it. Thus she remained in speechless admiration, till Zuri, having finished her prayer, rose and, turning, discovered her. The Japanese girl was by no means discomposed, as most Europeans would have been if found under such circumstances, but there were traces of tears on her face that stirred the honest heart of Pauline with mistaken commiseration for this "heathen girl," who was without the consolation of the Christian faith.

"O Zuri San," she exclaimed, "pardon my involuntary intrusion!"

"The grove is free to all," replied Zuri, bowing low, "and why not to the honoured English lady?"

Pauline's proselytising soul was yearning over the girl too forcibly to lose such an opportunity, and she broke forth—

"It makes me sad to see you have been grieving, O Zuri San. Do not pine for the dead. We believe they will be judged according

to their opportunities ; and why do you waste this food in an offering to them, of which they cannot possibly partake ? ”

Zuri drew herself erect with a dignified gesture of surprise—then said gently, in clear English, though with halting accent—

“ Can it be, lady, that your honourable self, who is so clever, can be in this matter ignorant ? ”

Pauline was taken aback by the ready English. She had yet to learn that the Daimyō's daughter, whom she had addressed compassionately in Japanese, was thoroughly versed in her own mother-tongue.

“ Ignorant ! ” Pauline repeated in English, aghast, knowing that she had piqued herself on being cognisant on most points concerning the “ false religion ” she burned to undermine.

There was a sheltered corner at the base of a small adjacent shrine which served as a canopy to the wooden bust of a Buddha.

Zuri turned towards the spot, and then signed to Pauline to approach, and they sat down

together. The Buddha smiled upon them benignantly.

"May I crave your permission to talk in your noble language without honorifics?" questioned Zuri deprecatingly. "I mean, may I speak as you English ladies do?"

"Certainly," responded Pauline. "You and I will dispense with them always—to my mind they are very tiresome."

"Then I will go to say, alas! you are very ignorant about our faith if you think we believe that our Hotoke (dead ones) eat and drink the material of the cakes, and of the water; of course, with the body gone they cannot do such a thing. But we do believe they can enjoy the spirit-essence of the cakes and water offered them, and it is that which pleases them to enjoy and to accept."

"But how can you possibly prove that they do this?" exclaimed Pauline.

"You do not wait to prove everything you believe in your religion," went on Zuri reproachfully; "why should we?"

“ But spirit-essence of the food is such a fanciful idea.”

“ No more than ether was, before your science-men accepted it. They cannot prove it by the touch, or weighing, nor can they see it with a body-eye. Yet they own now, it is there. We, who believe this big round earth is soaking through with life divine, can see an aura round the tiny leaf, as I see one round you.”

“ Round me ! ” and Pauline gave an incredulous smile. “ No, Zuri San, I never shall be saint enough for that.”

“ You are not saint,” corroborated Zuri, “ yet I see it there. Its colours are your qualities of good—its dark, your ignorance. What ! is it not harder still to think the spirit which is pent within cannot pierce body-walls ? ”

Pauline was silent, somewhat dismayed to think no one had ever presented her with this view before.

“ You tell me, honoured lady,” Zuri continued, “ not to grieve for the dead. We never grieve *for* them, but sometimes we grieve with

them, and once a year we commune all together ! ”

For the first time in her life Pauline was at a loss for a retaliative answer.

“ I cannot follow illusive idealism, Zuri San ; my mind is set on the practical exigencies of life. To me you seem like some beautiful breathing poem, just as intangible. You have very lovely fancies, but oh ! how I wish you would turn aside from them all for a while and study the earthly life of the Christian’s Christ ! ”

At this Zuri raised her arched brows in unfeigned astonishment. “ Ah so ! ” she said ; “ you think I have not studied Him ? I have read all you call your Gospels through, from head to foot of them. I find your Jesus all He said He was, but no, I do not find Him all you Christians say He is. Then when He went, His *Hannushis* (chief priests) much quarrelled and, later on, one, Jude, you call him, wrote cruel, bitter things. Oh, if Christians were all like your Jesus we might join creed to creed, for Jesus is as purely God as is our Amida ! ”

But this comparison was more than Pauline could bear.

"You cannot possibly compare the Saviour of the world to an idol," she exclaimed hotly.

"An — idol — what is that?" asked Zuri, amazed.

"Why, the images you make of all your many gods, of which this Amida is one. 'Eyes have they and see not, noses have they and smell not,' as our Bible puts it so forcibly."

"How strange then that you make idols of your Jesus, and of your Virgin Mother too!" said Zuri, with a deprecating smile. "You fix the body of your Jesus in stone, many times on that cruel cross, a brutal thing, I think, to do, and make perpetual all his physical pain. So you make idols too! But why not? Do we not make worship of the Being signified, and not the image itself?"

"But you multiply your gods to an unwarrantable extent. Why, your whole country is over-run with your idols."

"Perhaps," admitted Zuri; "yet they are not

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such dangerous ones as those you worship in your England, and yet never see."

"What do you mean, Zuri San?"

"I mean your demon idols of money, and the drink. Listen, my English friend! You come here with a good heart to destroy our images, and instead you bring us these. Say which are worse—these simple ones," and she indicated the Buddha behind them, "which typify Peace and Calm, or even our ugly gods who figure powers of Thunder, Wind, and Fire? Why should you come and wreck the faith that lies behind the mask of such as these? Remember true worshippers in both religions adore the same Chief God!"

"The same!" gasped Pauline, scandalised.

"The very same," was Zuri's quiet reply. We call Him Amida, Embodiment of Light, and you call Him Jesus Christ, the Light of the world! There is no difference in spirit, but only in the name."

"There I differ with you utterly. Why did our Lord so strongly assert, 'All that came before

Me are thieves and robbers,' if it is as you say ? "

" Because," answered Zuri simply, " every Jesus that came before your own had been thief or robber, as the Jew history shows. You cannot think he meant to condemn all the great god-teachers that came before Himself ? "

For the first time in her life it dawned upon Pauline that the text might be open to this construction. Was this pagan girl initiating her into the meaning of her own Scriptures ? The idea was intolerable, and her pride grew irritated accordingly.

" If there was no necessity binding upon us to convert other nations, why did our Lord command, ' Go ye into *all the world* and preach the gospel to every creature ' ? "

" Did He so say ? Well, even so, what other gospel could He mean but just the one I have been speaking ? "

" *You !* " exclaimed Pauline, with more emphasis than courtesy.

" Yes ; the gospel of loving-kindness and

fellowship of spirit, not the mistake-one of conformity to letter. Your Christ said, ' Let the wheat and tares grow together.' You are not all wheat, nor are we all tares, yet you Christians have brought many swords and much battle to divide them."

" Our Master prophesied it would be thus," asserted Pauline.

" Ah, He foresaw the hardness of the heart human, and all its will for power."

" Zuri San ! " cried Pauline, with involuntary admiration, " if you would only take Him as your only God, what a Christian you would make ! "

" Perhaps I have taken Him, only with another name," said Zuri softly ; then, rising, somewhat of the loyalty of her Daimyō father flashed from her eyes and roused her as she added, " would you ask me to turn traitor to my ancestors in proof of this ? First, I would die some hundred deaths ! "

" Christ is the only Son of one Supreme God, there is none else," asserted Pauline stoutly,

but she was scarcely prepared for the reply she received.

“ Yes, that is true ; but do you dare suppose that in long ages before your Jesus was born Christ never had appeared before ? Why, your own Scripture says, ‘ He left not himself without witness ! ’ Believe if you like that Christ—do you not call it—was manifest in Jesus ? But permit us to be also His dear children, and have our Manifest of Him, in Amida too ! ”

The view was so subversive to the orthodox theology of Pauline, that she was reduced for the moment to a stunned silence.

Zuri resumed more gently, “ Honoured lady, if you desire to—what you call—convert my country, you must allow in this truth, we are one ; you must win us, not by attacking and destroying our religion, but by blending your own with it, while you show us in your lives what your newer one is worth.”

Another apprehension rose in Pauline. Was Zuri an example of the “ amenable Japanese woman ” she had been led to suppose was so

pliable and submissive ? If so, how would this girl face the tidings of her lover's conversion, of which she was evidently not yet aware ? A sudden impulse, tinged, no doubt, with a human desire of retaliation, prompted her to acquaint the Japanese girl with the fact, proving to her by so doing, that one, whose intellectual ability she so highly honoured, had been influenced by the superior claims of Christianity to abjure his national faith.

“ We will postpone further discussion on so vital a subject,” she began ; “ it has proved of far higher interest to Ito San. May I ask if he has confided some news to you yet ? ”

“ News ? I do not understand ! ”

“ No ? Then I will forestall him. Zuri San, your fiancé has embraced the holy Christian faith ! ”

There was silence. Zuri's expression of absolute incredulity precluded the necessity of an answer.

“ What idle tale will the gossip tell next ? ” she observed presently.

“ It is no gossip ; it is true,” asserted Pauline

impressively. "I wonder he has not told you already himself."

"No," said Zuri confidently, "and he never will, and, craving your honourable pardon, I shall not believe it unless I hear it from his own lips. I grieve, honoured lady, that you should descend to so idle a tale."

Annoyed at her incredulity, Pauline rose to take leave.

"In any case, Zuri San," she said, as the girl bowed low over her extended hand, "you must be aware that Ito San, with his acute intelligence, would never consent to change his ancestral faith, save from absolute conviction that he had found a truer one."

Zuri merely bowed once more, but stiffened perceptibly, and as Pauline went away she felt that her parting shot, however self-gratifying for the moment, had been exceedingly ill-advised.

CHAPTER VII

THE PARTING OF "THE WAY"

EVEN when alone the smile of incredulity still remained on the expressive features of Zuri, and she attached not the slightest importance to the absurd rumour. It passed from her mind as she turned for a parting look at her father's sotoba. Absorbed in thought, she was unaware of another footstep that approached from the opposite direction to the path down which Pauline had disappeared.

This time it was her betrothed who had come to seek her, and he too paused for a moment in gratified admiration of the girl before him.

Presently she glanced round and discovered him, and her face suffused with a roseate glow of love as she extended both hands joyfully towards him.

In the eyes of Ito she had never appeared so beautiful and desirable as at this moment. He fully believed, with a man's masterful assurance, in his entire subjugation of her opinions, and in fact they had never had any occasion to disagree intellectually or morally. They had shared joy and sorrow, growing together from childhood as the lily of the vale grows beneath its sheltering leaf. The bare idea of severed existence seemed impossible. So sure was Ito of her acquiescence in all his decisions that even now he was not seeking her with the immediate intention of acknowledging his conversion.

Meanwhile, the setting sun appeared to swathe the grim monument in golden tissue, and Zuri stood, as it were, in a direct stream of blessing, while two radiant butterflies sported like animated flowers above her hair.

Indicating them, Ito said triumphantly, and very welcome to Zuri was the return to her mother-tongue after her long former conversation in English, "Behold! a happy omen, O Zuri! These are the living *ochō-meckō*" (a wedding gift

consisting of a pair of paper butterflies) "that will soon be presented to you in honour of our marriage day. You will be pleased to hear that the happy hour can be hastened now, as Lord Ingram has accepted my services."

"Then he has overcome his objection to our religion? Ito, oh, how glad I am!" And her face beamed with happiness. "It is strange you should tell me this now—for I have been told an absurd report to the effect that you had denied our Shintō faith and embraced Christianity. Of course," she added, in the absolute assurance of her love, "I denied it utterly—it was too foolish, and I had forgotten it until you told me this news."

There was a pause, during which Ito revolved the best method of enlightening her. At last he said, "Zuri, suppose the rumour is true. I know you would acquiesce in my superior judgment. This being so sure, I may as well avouch the fact to you now. The report is correct. I was baptized into the English Church two days ago. You see, it would not have been possible to obtain

this appointment otherwise, and I——" He broke off, startled to dumbness by the consternation in the eyes of Zuri, as she shrank as far as possible from him. The girl evinced as much terror as if he had threatened her with violence. She was silent, but her expressive countenance revealed her mind, and for the first time the possibility of a serious breach between them awoke within him.

"Why do you look at me like that, Zuri?" he exclaimed anxiously.

She had turned very pale and leaned against the sotoba, grasping the corner of the rough stone for support. Then she essayed to speak, but her voice was faint, and at first a mere moan broke from her, as if from inward pain.

"Ito!" at length she said. "Tell me I am in a dream. True? It *cannot* be true that you have done this thing."

"It is true," he declared, more decisively, "and you must learn to accept it, Zuri. Surely you will understand the necessity that drove me to take such a distasteful step. I had no choice!"

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“ No choice ? ” she repeated. “ No choice, Ito, between honour and dishonour ? ”

“ Pray do not be distressed, Zuri. I shall not exact any such step from you ; even as my wife you shall remain Shintōist if it pleases you. I will promise, by any sacred vow you like to exact, never by word or deed to interfere with your profession of faith.”

He spoke with the air of a man who makes as great a concession as can reasonably be expected, and felt quite satisfied with his own magnanimity. He looked for submission in the end ! Zuri had been too sedulously trained in the self-effacement of the daughters of Japan to hold out against him ; besides—did she not adore him ?

Then he became most unflatteringly aware that she was not even looking at him, and indeed to the girl's senses the whole of the scenery appeared obliterated. She felt as if an extinguisher had been suddenly forced over the sun, both without and within her, and she saw nothing but a vista of ever-increasing gloom that only culminated in outer darkness.

"Zuri!" Ito at length exclaimed, beginning to experience some alarm. He advanced as he spoke, and caught her by the hand.

Then, for the first time in her life, she denied it to his clasp, drawing it back with a shuddering gesture, as if from an adder that menaced her.

When she raised her eyes to meet his, Ito was no longer in any doubt as to the finality of her decision in the matter. Surely it could not be the yielding soul of Zuri that now gazed through these eyes with such reproach! He recoiled involuntarily, for there was resolution proclaimed within them that recalled to him her father's expression when he saw him after he had determined to commit Hara-Kiri.

"I shall never become your wife, Ito San!" Every word slowly uttered, fell with the solemnity of a knell upon his ears. "I shall never become your wife, because you have done that which has widowed me in soul—while you are still alive."

A wave of misery surged over Ito's spirit; he had never dreamed his act would have entailed

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such irremediable consequences, and inwardly cursed himself now for perpetrating it. The loss of Zuri, whom he loved as deeply as he was capable of loving, was far too high a price to pay, in his estimation, for the sake of any religion or even his ambition.

Earnestly he strove to propitiate her, pleading desperately, with an internal conviction all the time that his protest would prove of no avail.

“ I have only made a change of religion in form,” he urged. “ I care not, as you know, for Christianity. If I have a preference for any faith, it rests still with our own. This is merely an act of expediency, and I did it for your sake too, Zuri, to ensure the appointment which would enable our marriage the sooner to take place.”

She listened awhile with a patience that was piteous ; then came these words, deliberately and calmly pronounced—

“ I will never marry a renegade ! If you did this deed because of such motive as you avouch, you make the action still more culpable in my

eyes. No, it is Sayonara,¹ Ito—Sayonara, now and for ever." Then, turning from him, Zuri gathered the folds of her kimono round her, and moved slowly and resolutely away.

Ito dared not follow her. The word *renegade* had gone home like the thrust of a dagger from her hand. He realised his dismissal was irrevocable, and so also was his own fatal deed.

He turned to go with a set face of despair, though the stoic that is ingrained in a trained son of Japan, controlled the tempest of emotion that began to rage within. Full well he understood that, whatever after-success his ambition might achieve, he had heard the dirge of his happiness in those parting words of Zuri: "It is Sayonara, Ito—Sayonara for ever."

¹ Farewell.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE JAPANESE SWITZERLAND

So much has been said at home about miniature Japan, and her Liliputian people, that those of us who have become intimate with her innermost country are astonished to find, in several districts, men as tall as Europeans. As regards the scenery, one would rather describe it as possessing grandeur in miniature, in spite of the apparent paradox.

Although the mountains for the most part rise on a scale so gently graduated that Fuji-san, the sacred mount, seems isolated in their midst, yet there are tiers beyond tiers of lofty ridges. The slopes of these, sweep downward in glorious stretches of valley, flecked here and there by unruly rivers, jewelled with limpid lakes, and sparkling with bounding falls.



伊香保市 (伊香保市)

THE DISTANT VIEW OF THE IKAHO CITY.

IKAO.

There is a summer resort, or more correctly an eagle's nest, tucked snugly away in the midst of mountain peaks, which is more frequented by Japanese than by the foreigner, and is called Ikao. It entails a weary journey to reach it, and when, by means of the addition of runners and pulleys of strong rope, your rikisha has been dragged skyward in accomplishing it, you realise and admit that Japan undoubtedly possesses her Switzerland, and a very beautiful one it is.

The village has been tumbled up rather than built, house elbowing house, each one tilted at excruciating angles against the shoulders of its neighbours. From the rocks on which these dwellings are piled, gush forth iron springs of steaming water, boiling hot !

The high street consists of innumerable steps, which, seen from below, appear to bolt up till lost in the heavens. By the wayside there are occasional plateaux, and here the bursting springs are capped with wooden lids, and these huge cauldrons—for they are nothing less—are repeated at intervals throughout the entire ascent !

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Above, the road, whenever there is space for one, leads winding upward to a picturesque gorge, which, secreted in a ravine, has the source of the hot springs concealed within its jaws.

The view behind it and below it is superb. It includes forests rich in weird primeval growth—mysterious gullies plunging into fathomless blue mists, pine-clad intricate ascents, and beyond these the fertilised valleys of Agatsuma-gawa. The whole prospect is bounded on the horizon by the ranges of Haruna-san and the Nikko-zan mountains.

The winding way beyond the village penetrates to Yumoto, and is coloured a rich gold, deepening to shades of copper, where the iron-saturated water has impregnated the soil. This effect is beautiful in the extreme, contrasted as it is with semi-tropical vegetation that is coaxed into being by the warm volcanic earth. The overhanging cliffs on either side the gorge are draped with this voluptuous foliage.

The parents of Ito San resided at Ikao, living within a walk of the house of their son, which

was situated on an eminence alone, above the golden path that ascended the gorge to Yumoto. The house of Ito was small, but it had been the pride of its owner to decorate it by slow degrees with exquisite taste.

Built in pure Japanese style, which is severe in its simplicity, Ito had privately agreed with Zuri in abhorring the European fashion, which, they averred, crowded dwellings with furniture till they represented shops. The drawing-room prepared for Zuri could only boast of one *kake-mono*—but it was a painting of rare artistic merit. Even the colouring of the wall was destitute of design—save for a suggestion, conveyed by a single maple spray in one corner and a hazy sunset in another. Across the intervening space a solitary *homing* stork poised itself in the air, as only a stork—and a Japanese stork—knows how!

Yet out of this scanty material a poem was intended to be suggested—or a blank!—according to the capacity of the mind of the beholder.

The verandah commanded a lovely view, which included the deep ravine of Yusava, down which

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a foaming torrent rushed. Ito often pictured the enjoyment Zuri would derive from the scenery, and had erected a little arbour for her with a miniature pagoda roof, where she could improvise sweet music at her will.

The father of Ito was descended from a direct line of Hatamoto—that is to say, from Samurai, who had formed the special military guard of the Shoguns, literally Banner Supporters. They were the highest class of the Samurai—in fact, a military aristocracy.

Both parents were stricken in years and not richly endowed with worldly goods, but they had contrived, by practising austerity, to allow their idolised and only son every educational advantage.

Their intense pride in him when he had visited them laden with collegiate honours took the peculiar form of depreciation, only possible to a Japanese, and above all to a Hatamoto Samurai ! This did not obviate the fact that the hearts of both overflowed with triumphant joy and satisfaction. They knew and loved their son's

affianced wife, and the persistent prayer of the mother, before all shrines was that her failing eyes might behold a grandson before they were closed for ever.

The only shadow that occasionally clouded their joy in the success of Ito, was their aversion to his adoption of European modes and habits.

They belonged to a generation which still viewed the interloping stranger as a "foreign devil"—they regarded him almost as accursed, and always with profound distrust—trembling at the result to Japan of modern innovation that would fain adopt his ways.

When Ito first returned from Canada, he had joined the ranks of the "Jeunesse Doré," who went by the title of Haika-to, literally "High Collar!" and formed the designation of the "Smart Set" in Japan. He had, however, found his parents so averse to his change of clothes and manners, that he invariably humoured them by resuming his kimono and straw zōri whenever he sought their society, and thus their fears had hitherto been tranquillised.

CHAPTER IX

THE COST OF AMBITION

SOME weeks after his momentous interview with Zuri, Ito San thrust aside the shoji (or sliding walls) of his own house, and entered. It was then that an acute sense of the loneliness and uselessness of his home swept with devastating effect across his mind.

He raged inwardly against a fate he deemed undeserved, and which now led him back here as to the sepulchre of his departed happiness. A vivid memory awoke of the day when the roof of his new abode had been completed and Zuri had come with him to see the finished shell of her future home.

If, when empty of its present artistic furnishings, she had seemed at a loss for words to express her appreciation, how much more would she not

have admired it now? He recollected he had humoured her expressed fear that it was "too perfect," by allowing the builders to make a defect *on purpose*, in one secluded corner.

This custom is observed in Japan with every new building, because it is believed that by possessing one weak point the protection of the invisible powers is ensured. At Nīkko, the most magnificent of the temple gates has the design with which it is engraved traced upside down by the great artist who decorated the pillars, to counterbalance this risk of undue perfection!

As the thoughts of Ito flew back to that memorable day, its happiness smote him "like the glory of a star he saw not when he walked therein." How vividly he recalled the radiant face of Zuri, and her pleasure seemed reflected in the very smiles of the workmen as they raised their voices with the traditional chant which is intoned when their work reaches completion. This invocation is called Rakuseishiki-no-inori!

Rousing himself by an effort, the young man passed listlessly from room to room, till he paused

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before the alcove which held the Ihai, or household shrine.

According to the Shintō formula, this contained tablets of plain wood, simply arranged on a little shelf, entitled Mitama-San-no-tama, or Shelf of the August Spirits. Every month, according to the dates of death, the food offerings were here renewed, with fish, cakes, and saké. To neglect such a religious duty would be an action akin to the profanation of the Eucharist in a Catholic church. Ito had hoped to persuade Zuri, as he had long persuaded himself, that it would be most ill-advised to inform his parents about his change of faith. They lived too far apart from the social world to be likely to hear such crushing news, which would fall like a death-blow on both their hearts, and he argued that, in the course of nature, they could not linger on earth much longer, so why trouble their unruffled lives ?

He had apprised them of his appointment with Lord Ingram, but he had not explained that it would entail his departure to Europe for a pro-

longed sojourn before he could return to his native land.

If Zuri had not frustrated all his hopes, their marriage would have taken place by this time, and he could have left her happily installed in his house within easy access of his parents, whom he knew she loved.

Now all was changed, and Ito, who had ostensibly journeyed here to take leave of his people, found it impossible to go to them with the terrible tidings of Zuri's desertion. They would naturally demand the reason, and he lacked absolutely the moral strength to confess himself an apostate in their eyes.

A renegade! Yes, that was what Zuri had called him. Such a crime could not be propitiated in the opinion of his parents even by the sacrifice of his life.

Then the materialism which had been accumulating force for years within him, came to his assistance. Why was he lingering here before the Ihai, hesitating and wavering? What were the Mitama, or spirits, to him, when he no longer

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acknowledged their existence? No! He would not renew the food offerings! He had no longer any object in gratifying Zuri—why should he continue to be a slave to a custom he had decided was imbecile and puerile?

The sooner he nerved himself to neglect such superstitious observances, the better.

Yet why this hesitancy? Why did his feet seem glued before his household shrine? And why did he experience such strange reluctance to turn away from it and, above all, to leave it dishonoured? Surely the place was full of eyes—eyes reproachful, plaintive, and horror-stricken; they seemed to hem him round—"a cloud of witnesses"—that finally enlarged to the dimensions of a fiery wheel—threatening to involve him in its pulsing vortex! Pshaw! He was unhinged—unstrung—he had a touch of vertigo! He, Ito, who *knew* himself to be alone! He was overwrought, no doubt, and this inexplicable reluctance arose from the tenacious hold of hereditary superstitions which all men know are very hard to kill.





RENEGADE !

If he had found courage to tear himself away from Zuri and not see his parents again, surely he could take this last essential step. Love, Duty, and the Spirit Ancestral World, were strong illusions ! To succeed in loosening their grip, he must turn his back on them for ever.

So, wrenching himself away from the shrine, with the word " Renegade " resounding in his footsteps and throbbing in his brain, he withdrew to make arrangements for a secret departure from Ikao, and finally succeeded in descending on foot, and unnoticed in the gloom of the evening, the precipitous mountain-side. Ambition ! Yes, he would henceforth live for ambition—that alone should become his love, his God, and his goal !

A few days later, Ito San became one of the numerous passengers on board a steamer belonging to the *Nippon Yusen Kaisha Line*, bound from Yokohama to London.

A saké supper, entailing consumption of champagne, given him the night before his departure was followed by a generous " send off " next

morning from a group of the young "dudes" from Tokyō—otherwise known as members of the "Haika-to"!

Excitement of preparation, introductions to pleasant fellow-passengers, with all the fret of mundane detail that embarrasses the mind at the start of a sea voyage—surely these were sufficient distractions?

Yet why—when the sun declined, making the passive sea blood-red, as if it flowed from contact with the slain—why did the perverse machinery of the *Nippon Yusen Kaisha* set its engines pulsing only to one word, and why must that word invariably be, "Renegade!" and again and yet again, "Renegade!"

CHAPTER X

THE QUALMS OF ORTHODOXY

PAULINE ERSKINE resided with the Reverend Ernest Thompson and his wife in a suburb of Tokyō in the midst of a purely Japanese community. The inhabitants were chiefly merchants, the wealthier ones occupying semi-Europeanised houses set apart from the families of the lower trading classes, who lived in their ordinary native huts.

Mr. Thompson prided himself on the fraternal relations he had established, and on the courteous attention with which the Japanese lent their inquiring minds to listen to him in his little Anglo-Japanese church. The services and the preaching were carried on in the Japanese language, in which Mr. Thompson was proficient, and which he, his wife, and Pauline never ceased most arduously to study.

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Pauline had been secretly elated, and not a little surprised, at the ease with which the conversion of her first convert had been accomplished.

The good seed she had sown had sprung up so readily she was inclined at times to compare it to that which sprang from the rock, and to fear it might "endure for a time only."

To any one believing as devoutly as Pauline did, in the possible consignment of a soul after death straight to hell, it did her credit that she felt moved on occasions to shout the awful fact in warning from the housetops !

Surely only hearts of adamant could remain indifferent if they embraced such awful conclusions. Yet, despite her success so far, her late intercourse with Zuri had dashed cold water upon her ardour. Familiar passages of Scripture that she had hitherto considered it blasphemous not to accept *au pied de lettre*, began to present themselves with a note of interrogation appended to each, instead of a full stop !

"Mr. Thompson," she inquired abruptly one

day, "have you ever made a special study of the Japanese religion?"

Mr. Thompson was a cadaverous, overgrown man with the hungry eyes of a zealot.

He glanced at her in surprise at the question.

"I cannot say I have, Miss Erskine. Why should I so waste precious time? Besides, there is nothing to study in the aboriginal faith—it only consists of a mass of superstitions strung upon the idolatry of ancestors and images."

"But would it be fair if our religion was judged solely by its superstitions?" questioned Pauline. "Is it not possible there may be grains of truth somewhere in the background to have caused them?"

"I trust, Miss Erskine, you are not bitten with the modern tendency to exonerate paganism! I regard it as a device of the Adversary to deter us from extirpating the roots."

"Mr. Thompson, did it ever strike you that Christ existed ages before Jesus was born?"

The astonishment of Mr. Thompson increased as he answered: "My dear Miss Erskine, what

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an unnecessary question ! How otherwise could we believe in the Trinity ? ”

“ Exactly ! But I must say that fact has come upon me with fresh force lately. Well, as this is true, why should we believe it to be impossible that Christ manifested Himself in our world before our Jesus came ? ”

“ I do not hold it to be impossible, but I *know* He never did,” asserted Mr. Thompson stoutly. “ You are forgetting that our religion was a New Revelation ! I do not mean to deny that many God-sent men existed in the heathen world, but there never was, and there never will be, but one Manifestation of Christ, and that is our own. If they say, ‘ Lo ! Christ is here—or lo ! He is there,’ believe it not,” he added reprovingly.

Somehow these words, which Pauline had often quoted herself, did not appear exactly relevant.

“ I find the majority of the Japanese believe devoutly in the invisible world,” she went on. “ That at least ought to be some basis for us to build upon.”

“ ‘ Other foundation hath no man than one ! ’ I

often think it is a hindrance: 'the devils also believe and tremble.' "

These words rather annoyed Pauline ; she was by nature just, even in the severity of her orthodoxy, and any human being farther removed from a " devil " than Zuri it had not been her lot to meet. She was not judging her Shintō friend merely by what had passed, she was watching her selfless, solitary life ; and the longer she knew her the more she realised that she had set herself a hard, if not an impracticable, task to Christianise her, and with that a thought persistently intruded, though she repulsed it with horror : in the case of this heathen girl, *was there any need ?*

Mr. Thompson continued : " You asked me about the Shintō faith—it has practically no status theologically. It is a form of pantheism conglomerated with polytheism, and a more idolatrous belief cannot well be imagined.

" You inquire, Is there any vestige of truth in it ? Well, of course the survival of the soul after death is a sign of it, but this scrap of truth is so over-

run and mutilated with false conceptions that one cannot hesitate in condemning it. The missionary field entails hard labour, Miss Erskine. You must first weed every heart-garden thoroughly unless you wish to see your good seed choked."

Pauline sighed. She was not one to flinch from work—she had come out anticipating it—but somehow just at present she felt much was at stake that could never be reached by theological polemics.

"Really, Miss Erskine," Mr. Thompson said, in a lighter tone, "you have no reason to feel depressed so far. I congratulate you warmly in regard to Ito San. I do regard his conversion as a finished work, due far more to your efforts than my own. He told me you were the first to interest him in Christianity, especially in the interpretation of it by our English Church, by your lucid explanation of the books you lent him."

"Does it not strike you as very sudden?" remarked Pauline. "That fact sometimes troubles me."

“ My dear young lady, it is natural to distrust sudden conversion, and yet we often meet with genuine proofs of it. This young man possesses great intellectual acumen, so that the solutions I presented to him of doctrinal problems were instantly perceived by his logical mind and satisfied it. His sincerity, too, has been successfully put to a most severe test, for he has given up father and mother, and postponed his marriage in consequence and for the sake of the gospel. Surely this is relinquishing all that a man holds dear ? He writes me that he avoided any leave-taking with the old people at the last, fearing the effects of the shock for them. In this I think he was most wise. He could not expect them at their age to veer round to his views—so it was a saving of pain to all.”

“ I cannot understand the postponement of the marriage,” remarked Pauline.

“ In any case it is so, and I am so gratified with the behaviour of this young man that I am writing to Lord Ingram to interest him still more in the sterling qualities of his son’s new tutor.

I hope Ito San may turn his attention eventually towards theology. He would be a valuable auxiliary to the priesthood of the infant Anglo-Japanese Church."

"I am inclined to think the ambitions of Ito San point in a more worldly direction," said Pauline, with a smile; "but whatever he attempts in that, he is sure to succeed."

"Meanwhile, you must carry on your good work by gradually drawing his fiancée to an acceptance of the Truth," added Mr. Thompson. "It would be a fitting termination to the romance between the two, for Ito to return and find a Christian wife awaiting him."

Pauline shook her head dubiously. "Mr. Thompson, I find I am not strong enough to combat Zuri San's objections to our religion. I have even found some of them unanswerable. I wish you would talk with her some day."

"I cannot do that without the expressed wish of the lady; besides, I am so pressed with work that I shall leave you to combat her pre-

judices. Do not despair. I have no doubt of your eventual success ! ”

Pauline was silenced, but very far from satisfied. Thoughts and perceptions were beginning to course through her mind that she was at an utter loss to explain or control.

The fact was, her mental horizon was enlarging its borders, and she was staggered at the panorama that was gradually unfolding before her inner vision.

She even dared to question for the first time the wisdom of her own course of conduct in coming to try and missionise Japan.

Were our theological conclusions so flawless that we could venture to say to the children of an ancient faith, Mine is perfect ! yours is false ! She knew dimly of doubts and interpolations of our “ original ” manuscripts ! Had she taken her own religion too readily for granted ? and had she rushed in here, eager to convert, where she ought perchance to have trembled to tread ?

Mr. Thompson was intellectually satisfied with his creed. He was a scholar, and a gentleman

whom she honoured for having been true to a "call" that had necessitated the loss of a comfortable living at home and a risk to his health in an unsuitable climate.

Her musings were interrupted by the opening door, through which Mrs. Thompson entered, a pretty, bright-faced little woman, who went up to her husband and, laying her hand on his shoulder, said gently—

"Tea has been waiting. When are you both coming?"

It was a tender, eager face, framed in soft dark hair, that bent over him. Not Paul, the great evangelising apostle of the Gentiles, was raised to such a lofty height on the pedestal of Mrs. Thompson's esteem, as was this her zealous husband!—though it would have been a shock to her veneration for the saint to have owned it, otherwise than secretly.

CHAPTER XI

A VENERABLE LEAF OF THE YUZURI-HA

KANIN SAN, the father of Ito, had seen much active service in his younger days, and acquired military distinction during the disturbances in Korea.

The home of the honoured couple at Ikao resembled the models that can be bought of Japanese dwellings. It was set in the midst of a landscape garden, counted the most exquisite for its size to be found in the district. The house was situated on a small isthmus, backed by a wood that united with a slender stem of land and so prevented it from being an island. It was embraced horseshoe-wise on either side by a wide still pool, that lay like a mirror of burnished bronze ; access across it to the front verandah could be gained by a rounded bridge with unprotected sides. At a

distance this bridge resembled the exposed half of a submerged wooden mill-wheel, and would have recalled to the mind of the reader many a facsimile on old lacquer tea-trays. Part of the pool was carpeted with the leaves of the Lotus, and in August the tall stems rose up from the water to sway their heads in the breeze heavily laden with bloom. On one bank an ancient stone lantern, partially covered with emerald green moss, inclined sideways with age.

Dolce far niente! A garden to laze in, some one may exclaim ; perhaps so, yet to a seeing eye and hearing ear, a garden noisy with boisterous life, and fertile as regards improving one's acquaintance with some novel aspects of Nature.

There is a truth, hoary with age, always maintained by Shintōism, which has been smothered in Western materialism and condemned by a nervous theology, scared at its own bugbear of pantheism !

That truth is the immanence of God in Nature, the fact that the Supreme Intelligence does

diffuse Himself in His creation as well as individualise Himself in the Manifested Christ.

The Shintō faith acknowledges His presence in this *flux* of evolution, if I may so phrase it, that persists in forcing its way from the mineral kingdom up to man !

To the Shintōist this Presence becomes especially apparent in trees : they say that each one has a soul—not of course in the condition of a definite individuality, but in that of a distinct consciousness on the ascent to become one. The Yanagi or willow, is supposed to be particularly developed in this way, and one of these drooped over a small shrine dedicated to the Inari or Foxes in the garden of Kanin San. The spot was a favourite haunt of pretty “ Barometer ” frogs that hid themselves in the tree and chirped continuously when coming rain inspired them to give warning of its approach.

Large bull-frogs were also to be found, and were encouraged till they became quite tame because they indulged in a favourite pastime of gulping down mosquitoes. The pool, smooth as

it looked, palpitated with life, and exquisite dragon-flies with scintillating wings skimmed its surface whenever the sunshine tempted them to display themselves. The wood behind the house concealed all manner of tame and happy creatures—tame because never hunted. The cry of the wild dove could be heard, also the vibratory trill of the Japanese nightingale, the Uguisu.

The elderly Samurai couple were tenderly devoted to one another, though this was only evinced by the rigid courtesy of the generation in which they had been trained.

On the morning that followed the secret departure of Ito from Ikao his mother rose, greatly disturbed in spirit because of an ill-omened dream. First she fulfilled her religious obligation of administering a little bowl of tea to the "honourable August Ones!" reverently placing it before the tablets of the dead. This done, the old lady stole into the garden, her object being to whisper her evil dream to the Nanten.

The Nanten is a shrub which superstition

credits with the power to avert disastrous omens, and it bears beautiful red berries when in fruit.

The mother re-entered the verandah, not mentioning the circumstance of the dream to her husband, knowing that he also was depressed and disappointed because of the non-appearance of their son according to promise on the previous evening. Both parents dreaded the effect of the foreign influence which had come into his life, though neither of them knew it was about to entail a journey to Europe.

The faces of both Kanin San and his wife bore the traits that were specially characteristic of the Samurai.

The countenance of the old man, ugly, as some might deem it, was yet noble in the extreme. Honour, sacrifice, and chivalry had set indelible traces upon his features. Whatever pride there might be, and there was much, was pride which ignored absolutely the personal ego, and was exercised only on behalf of ancestors, emperor, race, and nation! It was the generous pride

that exults in offering everything and asking nothing, and that would, with Abraham, have knifed the beloved son, if some Divinity had demanded the act.

The face of the wife puckered into endless creases when she smiled, and she was always smiling through sorrow as through joy. This smile is the sign-manual of self-control with Samurai women.

She was one of a type becoming extinct, a daughter of Japan who deemed it dishonourable to allow her personal trials to wound other hearts. Unreasonably obedient, loving and faithful, her simple creed was selfless devotion, and her sole reward was to glory in the yoke to which she bowed her neck. The old lady was noted for wearing the coiffure of the refined Samurai style called Katahajishi. The headgear was not becoming, but then women after the age of thirty were thought too old for the fashion to signify (what would our English ladies say?). In regard to dress, the material composing her kimono was of exquisite texture,

such silk could not be purchased any longer, but the tint was neutral in tone and quite sombre in colour.

Both husband and wife, though poor, possessed costly wardrobes. Kanin San could easily have disposed of his hereditary suits of armour as a rare curio, but no money would have compensated him for the loss, because he deeply revered everything worn by his ancestors.

"This day, Omaye," he remarked to his wife, "corresponds to the monthly observance of food-offerings. Bring fish and wine, and we will go and renew them in the house of our son, since we have heard nought of his arrival last evening."

"Thinkest thou, Anata," replied his wife, striving to keep her voice free from the expression of her anxiety, "thinkest thou any evil accident can have befallen him?" As she spoke she stooped and spread her trembling hands over the glowing hibachi though the day was too hot to need to warm them.

"Does not the Yuzuri-ha guard the threshold of our home, and has one of the old leaves ever

fallen before a young one is well advanced behind it? Ito is the young leaf who has to be preserved in order to replace me."

The Yuzuri-ha is a tree that does project its leaves in this unique fashion.

The old man rose from his cushions as he spoke, and his wife hastened to obey him.

In their own home the shrine containing the tablets called the Miya, was made of unornamented white wood and erected on the Kamidana, which is a shelf dedicated to the gods. No images were to be seen here, because Kanin San belonged to the primitive Shintō faith that forbade them. Images were introduced into Japan with a decadent form of Buddhism: they bore no part in the earlier and purer expression of faith.

Nothing was placed on this Kamidana except the shrine, and in it were treasured some ofuda—which are prayers on strips of paper—and a small mirror, emblematic of Pure Intuition, which constitutes the "Eternal Feminine."

Just above the Miya hung a rope called Shim-

enawa, on which were suspended some gohei. These are invocations, always in a state of presentation to the gods.

As many readers are acquainted with the legend that originated the Shimenawa, it is only necessary to say that it was believed to ensure the house against the insidious attacks of disease.

The legend is to be found in the mythological summary of the Shintō tradition which is called the Kojiki.

There are cunning little cupboards neatly inserted into the Shōji, or walls, of all Japanese dwellings, and in one of these, Kanin San kept the ancient appliances for igniting holy fire. He excluded foreign matches rigorously, because of the phosphorus in them, all contact with bones of dead animals even in this way being interdicted.

The stern Samurai would not tolerate any modern innovation, even when admitted by others of his countrymen. The Miya in use must conform to primitive Shintō, and therefore the wood composing it was spotless and no nails

were employed in fixing it together. No noise was admissible in the building of his minute "Temple," in this Kanin San was in agreement with Solomon. Before it were the special jars for offering saké, vases for flowers, and a minute lamp which had its wick made of a kind of rush which floated in some specially prepared oil.

There was no obligatory rule about burning the lamp, every one could regulate that according to the necessary expenditure of the household. But on special dates in the year the lamp was absolutely essential, and Kanin San certainly would have denied himself food rather than leave the lamp unlighted even for a single night.

Before quitting their house that morning both husband and wife prayed in front of the Kamidana.

It is a mistake to suppose that the spirits of the newly dead are worshipped. Such spirits, or Shin-botoke, are prayed *for*, and sometimes interviewed, *even severely rated*, if necessary, but they are never adored, because they have not yet developed sufficiently. Only the spirits of the

antiquated dead are evoked in the sense of worship—those who have departed long enough to have ascended into a perfected condition—in other words to have become “Buddhas.”

It was these Kanin San addressed, using the Harai-tamai which more resembles a *Te Deum* than a petition. It is a chant of praise and thanksgiving to the ancestors, and pours forth the spirit of gratitude far more than that of intercession, indeed, in the case of Kanin San, he would have deemed any plaintive self-com-miseration, or communication concerning his woes, not only as insulting to the August Pres-ences, but derogatory to his own spiritual dignity as a responsible soul !

CHAPTER XII

THE WHEEL OF IGWA CRUSHES TWO HEARTS

It took the old couple considerable time to climb the winding gold-tinged road that ascended to the abode of their son.

When they reached the gate the mother could scarcely restrain her sense of relief because of some undoubted signs of Ito's recent presence.

On the verandah stood an hibachi only partly extinct, also a smoking-stool, with some freshly strewn tobacco dust. Discarding their zōri and entering, they found the remains of a meal of which the food-remnants were evidently fresh.

After this there was a strange inexplicable silence: no answer had come to a request for admission, and no response of welcome acknowledged their greeting.

Kanin San struggled against an overwhelming

sense of bewilderment. Such conduct was not in keeping with the constant respect Ito evinced towards them, and in which he had never failed from childhood.

“ Our son has certainly returned ; but where can he be now ? ” he questioned. “ Is it possible he has gone to see us, and we have missed him by the way ? ”

“ If I may offer my humble opinion, Anata, which is of no value,” observed his wife, “ I think that our son must have returned home hastily, knowing that it was his bounden duty to renew the food-offerings at this date. He came, doubtless, on purpose to make them, and after doing so was compelled by pressure of business to go away without seeing us, which he will fully explain when he comes, as he promised us.”

“ It must be so, Omaye, no other explanation will suffice,” acquiesced the father, but a look of perplexed foreboding deepened in his eyes and belied his calm words of assurance.

“ These things are unnecessary,” said the mother, placing aside the offerings they had

brought. "Let us go to the Miya of the Kami, there I feel sure we shall find our son has already placed the food before the August Presences."

She glanced round with a sigh of relief as she spoke. Her evil dream was of no account. Ito was safe, thank the gods, for had he not been here undisputably? That he should have departed again without having fulfilled his obligation in regard to the offerings was an act of sacrilege, to her, unthinkable.

"Omaye is right; we will go to the Miya," assented her husband, and with reverent tread they turned and entered the sacred compartment in which was placed the shrine. The shōji were closed, but they slid them open.

Then both were arrested simultaneously by a sight that struck horror to their souls. The Kamidana had evidently been neglected for many weeks. It was bare of any recent offerings, and only retained a shrivelled spray from one of the sacred plants.

The sambo, or small stool on which the food was ordinarily placed and which faced the shrine,

supported some little dishlets, empty and soiled. There was a still more terrible revelation in the traces of an intrusive animal, probably a cat, which is always more or less wild in Japan. This creature had demolished most of the food, but morsels of discarded fish still remained scattered on the floor. The scene was one of disorder and desolation, but in the eyes of the witnesses it was desecration unspeakable.

The old Samurai soldier staggered back as he would never have done from a physical blow, but the poor mother, breaking through the restraints imposed by a lifetime, uttered a protracted wail of agony. To her there could only be one answer to the enigma of the neglected shrine. It was, to her mind, absolutely incapable of such awful profanation.

"Our son ! Our son—is—dead !" she cried, and then sank senseless at the feet of her husband before the desecrated shrine.

CHAPTER XIII

WHERE AMIDA DAIBUTSU REIGNS SERENE

THE sea breaks softly on the sands of Kamakura until what time a tidal wave arises, and then woe indeed would betide the pretty summer residences of the Japanese *noblesse* which fringe its shores.

In the old feudal days Kamakura was the seat of government, but one year a tidal wave invaded it and swept it from end to end. It carried away the temples that surrounded that unique work of art, the Daibutsu, but failed to hurl it from its base. There it still remains, seated in matchless serenity, commanding not only the veneration of the Japanese, but that of thousands of pilgrims from nations of the West.

It was at Kamakura that Zuri possessed her own tiny house, you might almost have called

it a bathing-box. Small as it was, it was her castle, and in it she had lived alone since the death of her baby-sister, save for the companionship of one faithful little maid.

Despite the fact of solitude, she had been very happy hitherto, for her loneliness was bearable in the belief that it would terminate in marriage with the one man who had succeeded in winning her heart. While her father lived, her educational advantages had been exceptional, and the orphan of the honoured Daimyō was not neglected by the gentle ladies of the aristocracy, who never overlooked her because she was poor, but vied with one another all the more on that account to show her kindness.

They found the excuse of learning the Koto, an excellent one, to lure her to their homes, when driven by the heat of Tokyō to seek the briny breezes of Kamakura.

Now all was different, the season had not arrived and most of the residential dwellings were closed, a fact for which Zuri felt devoutly

thankful when she stole back broken-hearted to her home.

Here there were no curious eyes to witness her sorrow save those of her devoted attendant, who would never betray her, and who scarcely dared divine the cause. Even the physical solitude lost its bitterness and became unspeakably welcome.

The trial did not crush her, for, fragile as she looked, Zuri resembled the water-lily when it sways to the surface-storm, knowing its hidden anchorage is secure all the time.

At the present moment she did feel cruelly tried as a day had arrived, arranged long since, which she had invited Pauline Erskine to spend with her.

It required all the strength of mind Zuri could summon to keep this promise, in view of the circumstances that had transpired since it was given. She felt assured that it was through the instrumentality of Pauline that the apostasy of Ito had been accomplished, but the Daimyō's daughter was too proud to fail in her word, and

also too just to resent a course of action which would have been utterly powerless had Ito proved true to the core.

There were occasions when Pauline's frank speaking jarred on her sense of refinement almost in as acute a degree as the language of Billingsgate would have jarred upon Pauline !

Nevertheless Zuri liked the honest English lady whose love of "brutal truth," as she saw it, was so thoroughly sincere and uncompromising. Straightforward dealing was not a distinctive virtue of the Japanese, and Zuri was enlightened enough to see this, and respect it, even while she detested its methods. So she told herself over and over again that the intrusive zeal of the English lady would have availed nothing had not Ito predetermined to sell his spiritual birth-right, and in this, as we know, she was right.

So Pauline was received with even increased courtesy, and regaled with a dainty lunch redeemed from the character of "chow," to the relief of the English girl, by the addition of a European dish.

Afterwards, the two crouched upon soft cushions spread on the floor of the verandah, to bask in the welcome spring sunshine, and sip tea, in view of the distant sapphire sea, whose sleepy wavelets were drawing a tremulous chant out of the golden sand.

It was not till then that the conversation took a more intimate strain, started by Pauline, who remarked casually—

“ I fear the time will pass drearily for you, O Zuri San, while Ito San is absent in Europe ; but you will be receiving his letters, and before many months have passed, I hope, welcoming him home.”

Zuri glanced searchingly at her guest, but was satisfied no rumour of the ruptured engagement had reached her ears. After a pause she answered firmly, “ Honoured lady, the coming and going of Ito San no longer concerns me. The marriage will not take place—for ever ! ”

If Pauline had not been in her present lowly position she would have started to her feet in dismay. The announcement was a shock for

which she was quite unprepared, and it distressed her genuinely. That some disagreement or difficulty might arise on the occasion of Ito's conversion she had not deemed improbable, but such disastrous consequences as broken troth between them she had never expected, when they had been so devoted to one another all their lives.

As usual she blurted out her thoughts. "Oh, but this is too dreadful! It must not be; you cannot give him up—what is your reason, Zuri San?"

"Your own heart can answer that question better than I can," was the quiet reply. "Try and understand that here in Japan never would my father's daughter marry a—renegade."

The last word nearly failed her.

"A *what!*" exclaimed Pauline, more aghast than before.

"A renegade—have I not found the correct word? Does not it mean one who goes back, as you English say, upon his plighted faith?"

"But," remonstrated Pauline, "such a word is not applicable to Ito San, who has changed his

religion from sincere conviction ! You surely wish to do him justice, Zuri San ? ”

“ Oh yes—I—do—him—justice ! ” Zuri repeated gently, then, becoming aware that Pauline believed in the conversion being genuine, she would not debase Ito in her eyes by enlightening her further, but added with dignity, “ Be it as it may in the eyes of the gods ! I will never—never marry him ! ”

“ O Zuri San, there is a text that declares the unbelieving husband can be sanctified by the believing wife,” Pauline stopped, remembering she ought to have quoted these words *vice versa* to confirm her own point of view, and had become confused in her earnestness. A smile quivered across Zuri’s lips.

“ That Scripture is not of mine, dear lady.”

“ But it might be, and it shall be,” cried Pauline strenuously, and forthwith she began pleading with Zuri very eagerly, to reconsider her decision.

The news was truly a blow to her ; though she was angry with herself, for a feeling of guilti-

ness, at the part she had played in the affair, still she knew the pain of such severance too well herself not to be dismayed at having involuntarily brought it upon another. All her arguments, however, were in vain.

Zuri was immovable, and at last said in a tone that silenced the discussion—

“ This talking is of no avail. I will ask you, honourable lady, to make silent the subject between us.”

Nothing more could be said after that, but Pauline was quite miserable, almost to the extent of wishing she had never set foot in Japan.

Who was she that she should have incurred by her interference the responsibility of sundering these two souls? Mr. Thompson would have been amazed if he could have read her thoughts and seen the anti-missionary spirit that prevailed in her for the moment.

“ You desire to see the pride of Kamakura—that is, our Daibutsu—do not you? ” inquired Zuri, rising; “ come then, we will go together.”

CHAPTER XIV

THE CLASH OF CREEDS

Wondering at the splendid self-control that refrained from covering her with reproach, Pauline silently acquiesced, and the two girls set forth on foot along the pine-bordered roads of the pretty town.

When they reached the Torii, or gate, through which the Daibutsu is approached, Zuri indicated with a smile the following inscription which was conspicuously engraved in more than one language upon it: "Stranger! whomsoever thou art, and whatever be thy creed, approach with reverence this holy ground, hallowed by the worship of thousands of hearts."

They then passed up the avenue that leads to the most living image the creative genius of man has ever achieved in such uncompromising material

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CHICAGO



AMIDA DAIBUTSU.

as bronze ! The figure bends slightly forward, and was just now set against a background of cherry trees in their fullest perfection of bloom.

Pauline was quite unprepared, and somewhat alarmed at the profound impression this "graven image" made upon her. The face, gentle and alluring, expressed the ineffable peace that can only be born from conquered passions and matured knowledge.

It was the face of One who *knew*, and who would pardon everything because He understood ! A face that has inspired pilgrim visitors with consolation and reassurance for some seven hundred years. It was not the face of an ascetic, for the figure was well-nourished, giving every sign of temperate care for well-being of the body. It was a contented, not a tormented body, the natural manifestation of an absolutely satisfied mind !

"Zuri San," Pauline presently said, in a voice that was awe-inspired against her rebelling will, "who was he ? Tell me."

"Ah, you have asked a hard question," was

the reply ; “ but let us sit down in the shade of that pine, and I will tell you all I know, which is far too little. You use the wrong word saying who *was* He ? He *is* the Buddha, or a perfected soul ! But great as He is, He is not more than we shall each become in the dim ages of some far, far time. He is not the Indian Buddha only, though He is *that* to many. He was meant here to be our Shintō Manifestation of the Christ, whom, as you know, we call Amida. Amida is embodiment of Light to us, just as Jesus is embodiment of Light to you ; both shone forth at different periods of time from the same Mystic Christ who always *is*, Alpha and Omega, beginning and end.”

“ But you dared to say we also could become Christs, we, who are born in original sin ! ”

“ Original sin ! Say rather original perfection ! ” exclaimed Zuri. “ My honourable friend, forgive me, but you have said a great blasphemy ! All souls are offspring of the perfect Father, and must inherit His perfection, because from Him can come nought else. We are undeveloped

seeds of perfection, if you will—what you call potential, but perfection still.”

“ Then how do you account for the evil that appears so very quickly in every young child ? ”

“ I, Shintōist, do not make such terror of evil,” said Zuri with a smile, “ as you Christians do ! Has not one of your own writers found it to be ‘ inverted good ’ ? Evil is friction permitted to call forth our free will, otherwise goodness could not exist, as it cannot be demonstrated only by itself ! You make too much of evil, honourable friend.”

“ Then why did Jesus die on the Cross, to make atonement for the sin of the whole world ? ”

“ Never because His Father was an ‘ angry ’ God ! Never to ‘ appease Him ’ as Christians believe ! Yet your Jesus did die to make atonement for all, and He,” indicating the Daibutsu, “ lived to make it.”

“ I do not understand you,” said Pauline bluntly.

“ Ah, that is because you Christians mis-say the word atonement ! Look at the peaceful

face of Amida, do you not see at-one-ment stamped upon it ? ”

“ At-one-ment,” echoed Pauline wonderingly.

“ Yes, at-one-ment ! Jesus did not die to make a trade-like bargain for souls of men. He died to set them *at one* with the Father’s ceaseless love. That is how I read your gospel of atone-ment, the other rendering is unthinkable and blasphemous to me.”

“ To me it is subversive of all the Bible asserts.”

“ Not subversive of your Bible, honourable lady, only subversive of your literal rendering of its words. Read them in the light of other thoughts, and see how difficulty fades away.”

“ But in regard to this idea of inherited perfection, no doubt it ought to be, as we are all children of God, but I certainly cannot realise any of it pent within myself, and I do continually realise my own great sinfulness.”

“ But that is just the proof ! You could not realise that except you had perfection lying dormant, is it you say ?—asleep—within you. Wait, I have something to illustrate you,’ and

stooping down, Zuri picked up a chrysalis and laid it carefully on her extended palm.

“ Does this worm realise the beauty of the butterfly that lies pent within himself ? Yet it is there, folded away helplessly now, but evolving slowly till it breaks forth in the glorious winged creature that will bloom in the air like a flower ! So it is with us ; the perfection of the Father is cramped within ; it is there because it is our heritage, but He sees us as we shall be when by the effort of growth we shall be set free. This is the sort of perfection I mean, so undeveloped now it keeps us humble, but as certain of enfranchisement in the end as the butterfly is from the grub ; so there is no room for despair ! ”

“ But how do you account for the great and spiritual souls who do not hold this view ? ”

“ They will some day, at present they are content to lie, as you see the cattle do, inside the fences their theology builds round them. They have not yet unfolded the desire to pass beyond such limits. Could you keep a bird within those fences ? No. Then neither will you keep any

souls whose wings have grown enough to soar."

"I suppose I am one of the kine hemmed in by the fence," observed Pauline sarcastically, but Zuri did not seem to hear. The girl's hands were lightly clasped round her knees, her head thrown back, and her eyes fixed on the majestic figure of Amida. Her face was aglow with light, and there was so much unconscious conviction in her pose that sarcasm died, as soon as born, on Pauline's lips.

"All Buddhas have developed wings and soared Christward, dear lady," she went on, "whether they are in this world or on the other side; but the fact that makes them so kind and very tender towards us is that they distinctly remember the time when they too had no wings, and all the cramp and misery of the chrysalis state throughout its upward struggle."

"Oh," exclaimed Pauline, forcing herself back to her guns in defence of her principles. "It is at this point that a tenet of your belief comes in, which is so contrary to our swifter vicarious

scheme of redemption. You believe you have passed through myriads of lives on earth, and will pass through myriads more. Oh, the wearing, tiring thought of such a dismal possibility; how can you like to think it ? ”

“ The question is not, do we like it, but is it true ? ” responded Zuri gently. “ Our Shintō faith does not insist on it, nor does your Jesus, who says, ‘ He that *is able* to receive it, let him receive it.’ It came to us as a reasonable, what you call hypothesis, with Buddhism from India.”

“ What do you hold yourself, Zuri San ? ”

“ For myself, I believe it is true in the past, but I would not say it would so continue in the future for us all, because souls are at such different levels in advancement. But why so tiring ? Ancient teaching promises us each our paradise of rest between our incarnations, like ‘ children’s holidays,’ ” she added, smiling, “ before a return to school. I am surprised your Church is against it, when your Christ asserts it.”

“ Our Christ ? ” exclaimed Pauline indignantly ; “ how do you make that out ? There is His

speech about John Baptist being Elias, but I do not see why any one should refuse to allow He was speaking figuratively, particularly as we are not permitted to quote Him literally, when it does not suit the other argument."

Zuri bowed.

"There is justice in your contention," she admitted, "but you cannot so regard His positive assertion in the gospel you hide in the British Museum—the *Pistis Sophia*."

Pauline was intensely surprised. She had heard of this fifth "gospel," but did not wish to admit to an alien that she had never read it. "Can you repeat what is stated there?" she inquired, and her astonishment increased when Zuri responded—

"I will try. It begins in this way: 'Your Christ speaks, "Amen! I say unto you, The Virgin of Light will have the soul carried unto a body which is a record of the sins it hath committed, and she will not suffer that soul to escape from *transmigrations into bodies*.'" Then in another place He says again: 'The righteous man

shall have his soul cast into a body that will not fall asleep and forget." ' 1

"But," exclaimed Pauline, "I know the *Pistis Sophia* to be an heretical work refused by the Council as being unworthy to be bound up with the accepted Gospels. I cannot accept as irrefutable any assertion of our Christ from such a source."

"Yet the date of the work is quite as trustworthy as that of the Gospels you accept, and where is the shame of heresy when your Jesus was the grandest heretic the world has ever seen, for was He not heretic to the Jewish Church of His day?"

Pauline could not bear any more.

"O Zuri San," she said, springing to her feet, "I cannot hear my Master called by this term."

"Pardon me, honourable lady," said Zuri, swift to appease. "I did not know there was any meaning in the word heretic to wound, or I should not have used it. Come home with me now, and partake of my poor cakes and tea."

¹ See *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, by G. M. K. Mead.

"We have talked a long time, and it is growing late," said Pauline. "I must order my rikisha and catch the next train to Tokyō."

If her aura could have been examined at that moment it would have appeared disfigured by small spots, the sign of irritation of spirit.

Pauline was more deeply stirred than she realised. Her intellect was roused, and was clamouring to be consulted in respect to her creed hitherto accepted in "blind faith." She was deeply mortified to find, though she would not own herself worsted, how unprepared she was to refute this "heathen" whose regeneration was so near her heart.

Zuri overwhelmed her with parting courtesies, not the least gracious of which was the offering of a branch of cherry bloom. It was laid gracefully at her feet when she was seated in her rikisha. The expression used should have been "bud," not "bloom," for a Japanese never offers a full-blown flower, in order that the recipient may have the subtle delight of seeing it unfold.

Pauline carried away an indelible vision of the sweet girl, bowing low to her departing guest on the threshold of her pretty dwelling. She could not, for her part, congratulate herself on any impression she had made upon her—she, Pauline Erskine, missionary! who had come out armed *cap à pie*, to oust the devil from Japan in the shape of its indigenous religion.

CHAPTER XV

THE HATAMOTO SAMURAI "FACES THE MUSIC"

WHEN Kanin San recovered in a measure from the shock of discovery in regard to the desecrated shrine, he did not immediately endeavour to restore his wife to consciousness. His first feeling on glancing towards her was one of thankfulness that she had succumbed to this condition, and so stifled the sense of agony, at least for a time.

The thud of zōri becoming audible outside, he withdrew to the verandah, and encountered a runner with the post, who, on recognising him, handed him a letter he was on the point of conveying to his house.

With features set as rigidly as those of a mask, the old Samurai recognised the writing of his son. He returned to the Kamidana, and, standing by

the side of his unconscious wife, read the letter with deliberate care.

It commenced with the usual honorifics of salutation and self-abasement, and then the style changed, lapsing into one of almost brutal terseness.

Ito informed his father that by the time these lines met his eyes he would be crossing the sea to European shores, to take up his appointment with the English nobleman. He did not allude to the prospect of return—fearing to raise hopes in his mother's breast that might not be realised ; nor did he mention his secession from their faith. He avouched the fact that all idea of his marriage with Zuri San was cancelled, because he knew his parents were bound to hear of it in course of time—but he did not offer any explanation of the cause. In this way he hoped to spare them the painful knowledge of the whole truth, and himself the unpleasant—and possibly dangerous task—of full and complete confession. In this, however, Ito reckoned, as we say, "without his host."

The broken engagement, taken into consideration with the fact of the deserted shrine, revealed to the perspicacity of Kanin San all he had so guardedly held back quite as convincingly as words would have done.

The veteran knew that his son had not only forsaken his kindred and alienated his betrothed, but had sold himself to the service of the "foreign devil"—at the cost of his religion.

Well was it for the old soldier that he had been bred a Samurai, for he needed all the endurance his Spartan training afforded him to sustain this crushing blow. Ito was his secret idol, the sole and central pillar of his house, which had possessed a reputation for stainless loyalty, and could show traces of its untarnished lustre through many bygone generations. From days dim with obscurity to the present crisis, Kanin San had regarded this loyalty as an unimpaired legacy from the Ancestors.

Well for Ito that he was not personally confronting his father at this moment, for the aged Samurai would have assuredly plunged his

sword into the heart of his son if haply he might offer some expiation for the traitorous act.

The immolation of his dear and only son would have seemed to him the right and honourable course, even though it would have entailed fatal consequences to himself—by his refusal to survive the deed.

A slight movement on the part of his wife recalled to him the fact of her condition.

Hastily retreating to the verandah again, he rent the letter into shreds, and buried it among the charcoal embers of the half-extinct hibachi, watching it smoulder till only some indistinguishable ashes remained. His duty seemed clear and imperative. His wife must be spared all knowledge of the perfidy of their son ; and, in accordance with his code of honour, a lie to ensure this was not merely an expedient, but a righteous necessity.

Dead !—she had thought Ito dead when she became unconscious—well, dead he should ever remain to her rather than she should know she had brought degradation to the honoured house

of her husband by nourishing a traitor at her breast !

Taking somewater in a bowl, Kanin San returned to his wife, and stooping beside her, pillowed her head upon his arm as he gave her to drink.

Fully conscious now, she essayed to offer him her thanks, but her voice refused its office and broke tremblingly. Fixing pleading eyes on the face of her husband, she moaned forth the agonized inquiry—

“ Anata !—our son ? Where is our son ? ”

The old man returned her gaze unflinchingly, and answered her distinctly and firmly—

“ Omaye is right—our son Ito is dead ! That is enough for Omaye to know. Question me no further ; act as becomes the wife of a Hatamoto Samurai ! Wife, I command you, hold back your tears ! ”

CHAPTER XVI

THE WIFE OF KOJIMA SAN ARRANGES AN EXHIBIT OF BON-SEKI

JAPAN is the land of submerged tragedies, but just as the brilliant sunlight of its semi-tropical regions clarifies the atmosphere, so the smile on the faces of its patient people glorifies their trials.

Joy, not fear, is the keynote of their faith, for the gods incline towards the cheery-hearted, and consider themselves defied by an expression of gloom !

You do not observe any contention in the crowded streets, and as there are no occasions for swear-words, they have not been evolved from the language, except in the ports where the finger of Christian civilisation has set its seal.

The great difficulty Mr. Thompson laboured under in his missionary efforts was to instil

into his hearers what he called "a sense of sin." They came smiling into his church to hear him expound his creed, and went smiling out again, much more ready to adopt certain portions of it than to swallow it wholesale.

In the same way they adopted European clothes, many of them experiencing no sense of incongruity in disporting a bowler hat, high collar, and waistcoat with semi-bare legs underneath.

Certes, if "original sin" existed in a Japanese, he would not be induced to trouble his head about it.

Mr. Thompson and his wife, by their ceaseless toil, ready fellowship, and unselfish lives, won many *hearts*, but whether they won *souls* or not was a point which even they often hesitated to decide. Secretly, when unobserved, many a Japanese hugged his original faith and clung to it as he did to his kimono; and because it interested him to parade in Christian garments, it was by no means a sure sign that he had discarded his own for ever.

The Kojimas were in a position to gauge the actual standpoint of their country in regard to these conditions, and they did so as accurately as any one. The following conversation took place one day when the husband and wife were alone together.

"Hasu!" remarked Kojima San, "do not forget to include Mr. and Mrs. Thompson in your list of invited guests to your private exhibition of Bon-seki."

She bent her pretty head assentingly, then glanced at her husband and exchanged an expressive smile with him. "How is the English clergyman succeeding in his mission?" she inquired.

"Admirably—so he believes," responded Kojima San; "and I think it quite as well he should be encouraged in his happy illusion."

"Do you seriously think it *is* altogether illusion?" observed his wife, her face clouding anxiously; for, despite her Western experiences, this lady was deeply attached to her own hereditary sect, called the Hongwanji Buddhist.

"I think," remarked her husband, "that while we see Japan produce, as she has done recently, devotees who will contribute over a million yen to the rebuilding of the Higashi Hongwanji Temple, the peasants even sacrificing their hair, there is small fear that our country will fall into the net of Christianity. The English," he added, with a smile, "make the fatal error of spreading nets too plainly in the sight of the bird, in spite of the caution against so doing their own Scripture affords them."

The timbers of the temple in question had, in fact, been lifted into place by gigantic hawsers made of human hair, sacrificed through the self-denial of the poorer women who had no money to offer.

"That is true," said Hasu thoughtfully, "but I am depressed just now by the secession of Ito San, and that young man has disappointed me greatly."

"I know, but pardon me if I say you are very foolish. Under the peculiar circumstances, Ito San had no other course open to him. It was

only a conversion of expediency, never one of conviction. Lord Ingram would never have accepted him had he not become a Christian nominally."

"He will break the hearts of his parents if they ever know it—he has already broken the heart of the most beautiful girl in Japan, my friend Zuri San. She utters no word, but I have eyes to see, and I feel assured she will never marry him now, dearly as she still loves him."

"All that is also to be deplored as very foolish," rejoined Kojima San, with a deprecatory wave of the hand. "We are not living now under the exacting sway of the Shoguns, and loyalty which sacrifices one's interest is as out of date as it is fanatical."

Hasu was silent, as she would not gainsay her husband, knowing he was a Progressionist in regard to his creed as in all else. She thought sorrowfully that she too would have been capable of acting as Zuri did when she was her age—and wondered whether the fact that her courage would fail her to do so now, proved that she

had advanced morally, or deteriorated in the interim !

“ Your friend Zuri San has completely wrecked her own life,” went on her husband. “ Ito is a rising son of Japan, and he will live to acquire power and influence with the Government—which she would have shared. His fiancée was pre-eminently fitted to shine socially by right of birth, beauty, and character. Of course she should still marry Ito ; he would never ask her to forego her religion. Even now, Hasu, you should exert all your influence to persuade her to rescind her decision.”

“ I have tried my utmost,” replied his wife, “ and I hoped for success because of her attachment to me ; but what do you think she said at last, when I thought I had made some impression? ‘ When this temptation comes through you, Hasu, it is well-nigh irresistible. Spare me, for my heart is on your side ; but if you were to succeed in persuading me, understand that I would never survive to profit by my treason to the gods and to my father’s name.’ ”

“ Ah ! ” exclaimed Kojima San, “ then there is no more to be said. Zuri is the true child of her Daimyō parent—let her alone ! *Shikata-ganai.* ”

He pronounced the last phrase with an expressive shrug of his shoulders, for it is equivalent in Japanese to this assertion : “ It cannot be helped—why bother ? ”

“ And now,” he added, rising, “ I must go to the House.”

“ Do not be quite so late in returning to-day,” said his wife persuasively. “ You have not had a moment to spare for the children yet, and our boy will be so much disappointed.”

“ The boy ? Why, Hasu, it is the thought of him that makes me work the harder. You know the nature of the legacy I would fain bequeath him. An emancipated country, strong in the armaments she has adopted from her intercourse with the West. Ah ! but our boy shall see the foreigner commercially driven from our shores ; for by that time we shall successfully have practised his financial devices—taking care to reserve

all profit for our own race. The English are such diplomatic blunderers that they expose all their cards. The day will come when we shall throw off the yoke of interference from every alien, even as we broke the yoke of Russia and sunk her ships in our seas. It is only a question of time and patience, my wife ! We must not be foolish enough to kill the goose before we have sufficiently plucked the plumage she knows so well how to grow. Till then, remember ! We Japanese are, to the Europeans, devoted allies and friends—especially to the English—whose eyes are the most easily hoodwinked in respect to their own advantage."

CHAPTER XVII

THE REVEREND ERNEST THOMPSON BENDS THE KNEE TO BAAL

THE exhibition of Bon-seki, organised by the wife of the distinguished Member of Parliament, Kojima San, was strictly private.

It consisted of a collection of pictures formed with sand, which were contributed by the ladies of the aristocracy, amongst whom the art had been a favourite one ever since its introduction in the seventeenth century.

The term means literally "tray pictures," and the landscapes, which were most delicately manipulated in fine white sand, were traced on trays of highly polished black lacquer. The sand was sprinkled to depict the desired scene by means of tiny sieves and various implements specially adapted for the purpose. The pictures

generally represented sea-pieces or riverside scenery. The whiteness of the sand imparted the effect of moonlight, and a tiny moon with its reflection in the water often enhanced this idea. Genuine morsels of rock were used to delineate the shore, and the curving waves were sometimes formed with such skill that a rim of rising foam outlining each would be quite perceptible. Of course the sacred mountain, "Fujisan," figured largely as a popular feature.

The trays on this occasion were arranged in line on the floor the whole length of a corridor, through which dainty ladies and gentlemen came and went, crouching down occasionally on their heels to inspect the pictures, making flowery criticisms in respect to their neighbours' work, interspersed with depreciatory remarks concerning any specimen of their own.

A Princess of the Imperial House was present, and proved one of the most enthusiastic of the distinguished guests. It was pretty to see O Kojima San paying this lady the exaggerated courtesies of ceremonial greeting.

At first glance a fashionable European would have voted the assembly "dowdy," not realising that the etiquette of refined Japanese society does not admit of gaudy colour in costume except on gala occasions. A nearer inspection would reveal the costliness of the material of which the kimonos were fabricated, despite their sombre hues. The obi, or sash, was very often brighter in shade, and this relieved the uniform monotony.

All flashy colours were relegated to the Geisha class by the ladies, and even the wearing of jewels was kept in severe subjection, a fact which disassociates the Japanese at once from barbarian instincts. At times a single brilliant gem secured the obi, but it was very often the sole ornament the wearer displayed.

Mr. Thompson was lingering near his hostess, feeling distinctly bored and looking rather nervous. They were standing near a dais erected at the end of the corridor on which an image had been conspicuously placed. Every guest bowed low as he or she passed it, lingering now and then to open mysterious packages which

they had brought. These disclosed gifts of sugar-cakes in the form of flowers and maple-leaves, and various other dainties, all of which were reverently deposited by the donors at the feet of the image.

“ Even at a social gathering of this sort,” mused Mr. Thompson disgustedly, “ one cannot escape coming in contact with their idols.”

But he was destined to be tried more severely when the Princess, with a gracious request he could not ignore, placed in his hands her own contributions, intimating her desire, as he was standing between her and the image, that he would place them in position before it. The good man's face flushed as he rose from the act ; partial texts were worrying his hypersensitive conscience, such as, “ Touch not, taste not, handle not ; have no fellowship with works of darkness,” and others, which, torn from their context, were enough to alarm any zealous propagator of the truth such as he held it. Did his hostess divine his thoughts ? He fancied so when, fixing her bright eyes upon him, she observed quietly, in

English, "This image is not a *Godling*, Mr. Thompson; it only represents the Founder of this art, and we always set it up when we exhibit the results of his teaching in grateful acknowledgment. Although he lived as long ago as the year 1600, still we believe he knows and is gratified that his work is not allowed to pass into oblivion."

"What a beautiful idea!" exclaimed Mrs. Thompson involuntarily; then, checking herself, she bit her lip and glanced at her husband.

"Ah! it is good to do something great for Japan," remarked Zuri, who was in the act of depositing her offering, a tiny porcelain bowl of aromatic tea. "In our country such a one is never forgotten, because he is never allowed to die."

Mr. Thompson could not refrain from a glance of admiration. The girl was so undeniably lovely to-day, her beauty spiritualised as beauty can only be—by suffering held well in check. She alone was clad in a kimono of lighter colouring than those of the other guests—it had the tint

of a ringdove's breast, against which contrasted admirably a magnificent "pigeon's blood" ruby, forming the body of a bee that fastened her obi, on one side.

That obi could have stood alone as regards its texture. A sunset on the sash ends was exquisitely embroidered in gold thread, and in value it exceeded three hundred yen. It had come to Zuri through her mother, and so had the ruby bee. A single budding peony, almost as richly tinted as the gem, nestled in the folds of her shining hair.

Presently the clear tones of Pauline Erskine's voice became audible as she joined the group.

"I have only one fault to find with this marvellous display of talent," she was saying. "It is not permanent. I should never have patience to devote time to such an art, knowing that all traces of my toil could be swept away in one moment."

"These pictures are not done entirely for outside effect, Miss Erskine," remarked her hostess.

“ Indeed ? For what other reason, then ? ”
inquired Pauline, astonished.

“ First of all, for the sake of creating a beautiful sketch which can never be obliterated ! ”

“ Never obliterated ! ” repeated Pauline. “ Why, that is the inevitable result of which I have just complained.”

“ Yes, but the outward husk of it only can be lost. A book, a statue, a picture once conceived by the mind is in reality created for ever.”

“ Perhaps the honourable English lady has never heard of Akasa,” observed the Princess, who had studied Sanscrit and imbibed Indian philosophy.

“ Indeed I must plead ignorance. May I ask what it is ? ”

“ Akasa is the mental substance which is quite as intangible to physical research as ether, and has not yet been accepted by your material Western science. It is a kind of divine memory which perpetuates every idea created by the human mind, and renders it indelible. It preserves the archetype of every thought for all

time. That is why we in Japan say the Ideal is more real than the 'actual,' while each copy in perishable earth-substance is illusory."

"We know," remarked Mr. Thompson fervently, "that a great Book exists in reserve till the Day of Judgment, out of which we shall be sentenced according to the record of our thoughts, words, and deeds."

"Probably that is figurative of the same fact," went on the Princess quietly. "Some of us can at times read the records of Akasa, when that inward faculty is awakened which is called by the modern world 'clairvoyance' and by the ancients 'the third eye.'"

The word "clairvoyance" sent a shiver down the spine of Mr. Thompson, who honestly associated such powers with the instigation of the Devil.

"The third eye must have formed part of even the physical anatomy, in bygone ages," observed Zuri; "remnants of it have been actually found."

"Does that explain the fact that I have

occasionally seen images of some of your ancient celebrities in the temples with three eyes instead of two? ” inquired Pauline.

“ That is so,” corroborated her hostess, “ and my husband has in his possession a little case containing a tiny hardened pellet, the remains of a secretion of that organ, which he himself extricated from the skull of an ancestor.” ¹

She whispered an order to an attendant, who brought forward an antique case containing the relic, which was handed round to the company.

“ I certainly am discovering there are more things in heaven and earth than we have dreamed of in our philosophy,” said Pauline sententiously, “ but with regard to these unseen records, I devoutly hope I shall never be able to decipher my own.”

Everybody laughed, and with ready tact turned her candid speech into the “ bon mot ” of the afternoon, and it was interpreted and passed round accordingly.

All the Japanese ladies assented delightedly.

¹ Fact.

An outbreak of genuine opinion, unveiled by apology, was to them a novelty. Zuri joined heartily in the mirth provoked, and said she quite agreed with the English lady.

The company moved on continuously, pausing at times to stoop down and examine the pictures, which could only be fairly criticised from a lowly posture.

Mr. Thompson, sorely incommoded by the length of his legs and back, found the process excessively irksome, not to say exhausting.

Presently, in attempting to rise abruptly from his knees, he slipped down again upon one of them, and the unruly member caught the edge of the tray containing the landscape he had been examining ; it tilted it, distributing its contents in so doing over his face and entire person. He rose from beneath a deluge of sand, rocks, and mountains, not without pain, which he bore uncomplainingly. This was the more commendable because a sharp portion of cliff had penetrated his offending knee !

It chanced, unfortunately, that the wrecked

landscape was the most intricately and delicately executed specimen in the whole exhibition, and the artist, a lady of rank, who was present, could not have been human had she not felt distressed and disturbed by the accident.

So completely, however, are the emotions under the control of the well-bred Japanese that this lady only laughed graciously, as if charmed by some admirable byplay especially designed for her amusement. She waived aside Mr. Thompson's profuse apologies, and proclaimed herself, to his amazement, his everlasting debtor !

" But alas," stammered the contrite clergyman, " I have destroyed your beautiful handicraft for ever."

" That is impossible," was the ready rejoinder. " Do not forget that my ideal of the work still exists engraved on the records of Akasa, and it is a very superior landscape to the one I expressed in sand, which is justly reduced to ruins."

" Constance," observed Mr. Thompson to his wife after their return home, when they were once more alone together, " never ask me to

go to a Bon-seki exhibition again as long as we remain in Japan ! Every bone in my body aches to distraction, and I firmly believe the women were mocking me under cover of their laughter and eternal smiles."

" Oh no ! " exclaimed his wife, " why should they ? I think they were only sincerely desirous to set you at your ease after so disagreeable an accident. I confess I have enjoyed myself this afternoon—their conceptions are so original."

But Mr. Thompson had seated himself with a sigh, and was ruefully contemplating his injured knee, or rather a three-corner cut in the trouser which covered it.

" My best London pair ! " he moaned, " and think of the extended interval which must elapse before I shall be in a position to renew them ! "

" Poor old boy," said his wife sympathetically. " Oh yes, that is hard luck. What a tear ! And we dare not let a Japanese tailor repair it. I shall have to make the effort," and she threw her arm round his neck.

" Really, Constance, my collar was the only

uncrushed remnant left to console me, and what is it reduced to now, I wonder ? ”

“ Sorry ! But, Ernest, did not the difference in the behaviour of the Japanese woman strike you as very forcible ? ”

“ In what manner ? ”

“ I mean compared to that of the English lady whose beautiful dress you stepped on in that crush at the Embassy the other evening. Why, this Japanese never desisted for one instant from her amiable smile, even under such severe provocation ; but I looked at the English lady after she had apparently accepted your apology, and *her* face was like the face of a fiend. I could not help thinking, if only we lived in a palace of Truth, what abominable language she would have used ! ”

“ Alas ! ” exclaimed her husband wearily, “ I could almost find it in my heart to regret that these heathen have so many virtues. They too often form stumbling-blocks in the path of our success.”

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE DEPTHS OF THE FORGE OF VULCAN

WITHIN a day's march of Ikao, beyond the lake of Haruna, which lies like an unshed tear in the socket of an extinct crater, is an awe-inspiring gorge called Tenjin-Toge. It lies deeply set within the inky jaws of mountain passes, where assuredly in primeval days god Vulcan established his flaming forge ! Earthquakes must have split the cliffs primarily until those fathomless dark chasms yawned asunder, becoming petrified in the very act. Then, secretly in the bowels of the earth below them, Vulcan shaped his weapons, thrusting them aloft at intervals like colossal lances, grasped in the unseen depths by invisible hilts, while their blades pointed upward as if to pierce the sky !

These " weapons," or solid spurs of rock,



BEFORE THE SHRINE.

appeared at various levels—bare of growth, although Nature had done her utmost to wreathe with semi-tropical foliage the stupendous jaws from which they sprang.

The upturned blades remained absolutely naked, seeming to threaten with inevitable destruction any adventurous passer-by.

Yet it was here, between these savage spurs, that in some former age beyond the memory of history, hermits had intrepidly scaled the cliffs, and even dared to span the awful chasms. By slow degrees appeared the roofs of temple buildings, each one ensconced alone on some precipitous ledge, veritable eagles' nests, clinging to the actual bases from whence the rock-swords sprang.

The date of the foundation of Haruna Temple is lost in the mist of ages, the earliest records extant only dating back five centuries. At that time even they must have been hoary with age, if not in actual material, most certainly in regard to design, for they were always renewed when decay set in. At the time the records first take note of them, a sect of powerful Buddhist exor-

cisers and magicians had established themselves in this most suitable environment.

They must have been "white" and not "black" magicians, for they were conspicuous for honour and their loyalty to the reigning Mikado of their day, eventually losing all they possessed by siding with the noble Nitta Yoshisada, a warrior *sans peur et sans reproche*, who defeated the rebels of Kogō and Ashikaga. Probably it was within these very temple fastnesses that Yoshisada himself achieved the adeptitude that enabled him afterwards to enact the part of Moses !

Finding it impossible to effect a landing at Kamakura, owing to the disposition of the enemy's war-junks, Japan is never tired of relating how he baffled them ! Climbing the giddy heights of the cliffs, he invoked the god of the sea with vehement prayer, flinging his sword with " words of power " into the waters !

Immediately the tide retreated, leaving a dry space for the extent of a mile and a half, and by means of this passage the hero and his men passed safely over !

At the period of which I write, Haruna Temple had been withdrawn from the Buddhist control and rededicated to the ancient Shintō deities Ho-musubi, God of Fire, and Haniyasu-Hine, Goddess of the Earth.

The Shintō priests in attendance at the temple were not excluded from marriage by the rule of the more ancient Faith. Experience before abstention, was the keynote of their code. Below the rugged and toilsome steps, roughly hewn out of the volcanic rock, that ascended to the temple buildings perched above, there stretched a noble avenue of cryptomeria trees which clothed the mysterious chasm of the yawning gorge. At one point it fringed a curious formation of cliffs termed Kurakake-iwa because it resembled a flying buttress, and after this, it bordered the raging torrent, fencing it off from a one-sided street of dwellings that resembled some cautious distribution of card-houses.

Each one of these served as a prop to its neighbour, and, owing to the steepness of the descent, was placed considerably below it, so that it would

have been quite possible to ascend from roof to roof as one would a staircase. The abodes constituted the homes of the wives and families of the priests ; they were too far removed from the temple precincts to interfere with the solemn solitude that prevailed in its courts, and except on occasions of festival, the junior priests were seldom seen beyond the confines of their own domain.

Only the High Priest frequented, for purposes of meditation, the secluded courts that were sheltered under the sacred eaves. Hannushi San was an astronomer of no mean order, consulted as an authority throughout Japan, in spite of the fact that he often smiled at the astrological predictions confided to him by over-credulous pilgrims !

“ My children,” he had been heard to say, “ know that, although the same constituents which compose the planets go to the making of your bodies, and this correspondence controls certain issues, yet, in the main, the measure of volition that every living soul inherits from the

Supreme is capable, when curbed and trained, of altering the complexion of igwa,¹ even if it cannot altogether counteract its consequences."

In person, Hannushi San was a rare Japanese in regard to height. He was of very noble mien, yet his clean-shaved face did not so much express the superiority of the sage as the sympathy of the spiritual counsellor. There was no arrogance in his bearing, but there was much dignity, born of toleration, upon which few men would have dared to encroach. As son, brother, husband, and father, this man, in distinction from his celibate Buddhist brethren, had served through those educational human stages. Therefore he could enter from experience into the difficulties and temptations that beset such relationships in a far higher degree than those could who had always avoided them. Such had been the consistency of his straight, clean life that his counsel was sought from far and near. The lines on his face were not so expressive of care as of bygone experience, and his smile was

¹ Cause and effect.

not so much the stereotyped smile of etiquette as of quiet humour. Signs of this might often be noticed scintillating from his observant eyes as they glanced brightly between their corner-tilted lids.

Even his fellow-countrymen found it hard to decide on the age attained by Hannushi San, for in him matured opinions were still tempered by appreciation of the impulses of youth.

The grasshopper had never with him "become a burden," neither had "desire failed." This was simply because it was set for satisfaction on the acquisition of Wisdom, which is as far beyond mere "learning" as the soul is superior to the form that fetters it.

There was no room for despondency in the heart of this priest, kept buoyant by realisation of Divine Immanence.

The ancient affirmation of his Shintō Faith was not a matter of eternal hope to him, it meant eternal certainty.

"Verily, verily," it asserted, "even plants, trees, rocks, and stones *all* shall enter into Nirvana!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE HATAMOTO SAMURAI RECEIVE THEIR GUESTS

IF excitement could stir the solemn silences of this mystic retreat such excitement was commencing now. The period had been reached when the Bommatsuri or Bunku is celebrated, that is, the National Festival of the Dead.

It lasted three days and three nights, but before entering into details concerning it in this locality, I must ask the reader to return with me to Ikao and revisit the home of Kanin San.

The father of Ito had been stoically consistent in his conduct, and had sedulously guarded his wife from the full knowledge of the truth concerning their son. Owing to this, her sorrow became supportable to the poor mother. Death was not severance to her, in its cruellest sense,

and preparations for the universal Commemoration, when spirits are believed to revisit their homes for a while, afforded the first alleviation to her bereaved affection.

She was also somewhat comforted by having obtained her husband's consent to make a pilgrimage together to the Holy Shrine of Haruna, the hereditary Temple of their family. This they agreed to do when their intangible guests had departed from their home.

There was solace, too, in preparing the special food "honourably cooked" for presentation to the souls of her kindred as well as to the spirit of her son. She remembered the favourite fruit of Ito, Uri Saikawa or melon, also his choice in cakes. All day she attended to the Kamidana and refilled the little bowls with tea.

Fires were ignited every night to welcome the visitors from Hades, and torches were placed in the pretty landscape garden to light the path.

She wrapt up the food she presented in Lotus leaves which she plucked from the bosom of the miniature lake, and had been gratified to find

some blooms of the flower that had appeared unusually early—which obviated the necessity of using artificial ones.

It was agony to Kanin San to watch these preparations, knowing all the time that his son was in no such honourable company as that of the blessed Hotoke, or departed souls ; but the old Samurai had made what was from his point of view the most exalted moral decision in enforcing the deception concerning the fate of his son. He was convinced that it was better to endure the bitter mockery of this than to add the poison-drop of the whole truth to the brimming cup of his wife's anguish. So he watched her silently, and knew, while affecting to be ignorant, that she was preparing to transgress a recent prohibition of the Government against the ancient custom of launching toy boats called Shōryobune which were supposed to be serviceable to the departing ghosts. Kanin San was aware, though he ignored the fact, that his wife had been busily employed in fabricating a little ship—according to custom, with straws of barley. Lading it with incense,

she lighted a tiny lantern at the prow, and placed on the gunwales a small paper banner inscribed with the Mangi, which is the earliest form of cross and corresponds with the Indian Swastika.

On the sail she wrote the Kaimyō or soul-name of her son. This is never told to any one, except the priest who receives the babe after birth. On the last night of the concluding festival at Ikao, when the entertainment of the spirit-visitors was concluded, Kanin San followed his wife, taking care to be unobserved by her as she surreptitiously crept down to the riverside.

There she waited while she said her secret prayers. These were to the effect that the soul of her son might eventually become a Buddha or "perfected" one,—that he might not sigh for the world he had left, or be subject to false guides in the Meido, or Hades, where he roamed.

Concluding with a whisper that conveyed her undying love, the mother launched her boat, and watched it float gently away—the night being fair and still—on the breast of the undisturbed water.

This "send-off" to the soul was unselfish in the extreme, as it was given to one she longed to detain,—but it was in accordance with her Shintō teaching to refuse to fetter the spirit with her earthly desires for its continuous companionship, lest it should suffer from becoming "earth-bound."

There was yet another curious custom that this mother elected to observe. Reaching home she drew forth from her private treasury a most peculiar relic. This was the navel-string of her first-born babe—which is always preserved by the parents—and in case of the death of a son is given up by them to be buried with his body. After the injunctions her husband had so strictly laid upon her, the wife did not dare ask him where her beloved Ito had been laid to rest, but she took the relic and, after enveloping it carefully in many preservative coverings, laid it reverently aside, meaning to take it with her on her pilgrimage to Haruna. She intended handing it over to the discretion of Hannushi San, High Priest of that venerable Temple, for he it

was who had received her son in infancy and had trained him during childhood in the obligations of the Shintō faith ; he would know where to bury it. Then with it she set aside another heart-treasure—a gorgeous little kimono of brilliant hues.

It was a perfect Joseph's coat, for children are not excluded from wearing brilliant colours, and it was the first that had adorned the shoulders of her baby-son when he began to attempt to run alone. She could see him tottering to his father's side now, and gaining it by sheer force of will in the triumphant pride the bestowal of the garment conferred. If this sacred relic could find favour in the sight of the Illustrious Ancestors, how freely would she not tear it from her heart-strings, and present it at their Shrine ? She was craving to see Hannushi San, for to his compassionate understanding the mother felt she could unburden her grief and in his sympathy fully confide.

She was perplexed as to the cause of her husband's reticence, particularly when he made no effort to inscribe the name of their son on the

Ihai or records of the departed. He made no objection, however, when she had done this, writing Ito's *known* name with scrupulous care upon it.

After the ceremonies in regard to the departure of the Hotoke from their home had been concluded, one other rite notably primitive was performed.

When our honourable couple were on the eve of departure from Ikao to undertake their pilgrimage, the wife served her husband with a special dish that was always partaken of by his ancestors when commanded to escort their Daimyō to battle. This was a dish of the best fish Japan can produce, called Tai, and it is presented on a leaf from a peculiar tree which is afterwards hung over the threshold to charm the travellers back again. The idea is, so say the Japanese, that the leaf from this tree beckons one back when moved by the breeze.

All these curious and unique superstitions, with which only the traveller who has penetrated the heart of the country can become familiar,

prove how intimately the consciousness of the people is in affinity with the mysteries of Nature.

When the fish was placed before Kanin San his wife noticed that he fixed his eyes upon it in an abstracted manner. "Wilt thou not eat, Anata?" she questioned anxiously.

"Go thou and sleep, Omaye, to strengthen thyself for the journey of the morrow," was the irrelevant reply. The obedient wife never ventured to repeat a question, she simply bowed acquiescently and withdrew.

Closing the shōji behind her, she retired to her couch on the ground, weeping silently until exhaustion threw her into a troubled sleep.

Dawn was breaking when she struggled to her feet. To her alarm the futon, or bed-coverings, of her husband, had been undisturbed. Returning to the compartment where she had left him the previous night, she saw him still seated near the hibashi, now extinct, the neglected bowl of fish before him, and the pair of chopsticks awaiting his use.

“Anata,” she cried in terror, and again
“Anata !”

Then venturing nearer she laid her hand appealingly on his arm.

The eyes of Kanin San were half closed as was his wont in meditation, and a swift shudder convulsed his shoulders, as he opened and turned them towards his wife.

Then the tense pressure of the closed lips was relaxed by a forced smile.

“Omaye? — Oi! — I recollect, — I promised thee! To-day we make a pilgrimage to Haruna, to intercede with the gods on behalf of our departed son! Have I waited here so long in body—while so far away in soul?”

Then with a strange and bitter laugh he forced back some forbidden tears that dared suffuse his eyes, and rose to make his preparations.

Our pilgrims started alone, and despite their rank there were no retainers now to carry their burdens. According to the orthodox custom of old Japan, the wife followed her husband meekly in the rear, laden with the packages. As she

gazed at him walking in advance a new fear assailed her, and she was seized with a tremor of agitation.

Why was her husband carrying the Hereditary Sword? Why had he lifted it from its honourable pedestal of distinction where it had rested ever since it had been last imbrued in blood by his hands, during the late victorious war? It was a peerless blade forged in the fourteenth century by the renowned Masamune, who rivalled the sword-makers of Seville.

Why was he partially secreting the honoured weapon, sheltering it beneath his kimono, like one who would fain conceal his motive for the act?

CHAPTER XX

A BRAVE "SEND-OFF" TO A PASSING SOUL

THE Princess Ariso, who had been not merely a patroness, but a reliable friend to Zuri, was perplexed respecting the true reason of the ruptured engagement, and, being so, brought her national characteristic of patience to bear upon ascertaining the cause.

Too innately refined to force the question upon Zuri by direct or indirect inquiry respecting motives she evidently desired to suppress, the Princess at last, through her husband, discovered the conditions of Ito's appointment with Lord Ingram. It was easy to divine the rest, but, not being a devotee in respect to her religion, the Princess pitied Zuri more than she honoured her for her self-immolation on that account. In the place of Zuri she would have sacrificed her

faith to her love any day, as it did not possess for her such vital reality, and accordingly she would not despair of persuading her friend to rescind her decision.

With this object in view she persuaded Zuri to vacate her little house at Kamakura and seek distraction midst the mountain breezes of Ikao. The Princess affected a craving for secluded sea-bathing, and offered Zuri the loan of a residence of her own at Ikao, if she would permit her to take in exchange the little model home at Kamakura. Her object was, to melt the adamant resolve of Zuri, by confronting her with the distress her desertion of their son had occasioned his parents. She knew Zuri was beloved by them, and hoped much from her association with the disappointed mother.

In due course Ito San would be returning to Japan, and it should not be her fault if the question of marriage was not reconsidered.

Zuri was the more easily persuaded to go to Ikao, owing to a great desire she had to visit Hannushi San.

The High Priest was akin to her on her mother's side, and thus he had known her from birth. The girl was also anxious to judge for herself how much of the truth Ito had imparted to his people, feeling certain he would at least suppress the confession of his apostasy.

The abode of Princess Ariso at Ikao was situated above a lovely valley at a considerable distance from the home of Kanin San, so Zuri felt she could safely defer meeting the old couple until after a consultation with the High Priest of Haruna.

The Bommatsuri was in full swing when she arrived at Ikao. The quaint little township is scattered artistically on either side one long ascending street, not of steps, but of rock ladders ! At night it opened a thousand eyes in which welcoming lights twinkled. They gleamed at present on every parapet. They shone softly like enlarged glow-worms in the dusky groves of the cemeteries, and they gleamed in lonely huts dotted here and there on the plains amid the rice-tracts.

The intangible visitors from the Meido found Ikao waiting wide-eyed to receive them. Yet even during this most solemn festival hilarity always prevailed. The people rose laughing from their prayers, never believing the gods desired to dock them of their glee.

Up and down the laborious steps of the temples, baby children stumbled with their brown fat legs, but if ever tears intervened they were promptly snatched up, caressed, and their woes soothed even by strangers passing that way.

The little ones are not allowed to be sorry in Japan. Sorrow will find them soon enough, their elders say.

On the night after her arrival at the residence of the Princess, Zuri, when all her needs had been generously supplied, escaped to revel in the scene, and, descending the slopes that led her to the valley, she wandered on to the brink of the river. Here she found herself secluded, for the stir and murmur and dazzle of lights seemed concentrated on the heights beyond and above her. The girl felt strangely isolated as she

gazed across the river, which, growing calmer here, was scarcely ruffled by the on-flowing current. Presently a star gleamed upon the surface of its breast, and this gradually resolved itself into a light carried by a solitary little ship in full sail.

It swung swiftly round a curve, and drifting towards her was caught by an eddy, which after a protracted struggle gained the mastery and finally dashed it upon the bank almost at the feet of Zuri. She knew it at once for a craft of the Shōryobune and, marvelling whence it came, bent down with eagerly awakened interest to rescue it from destruction.

Her astonishment can easily be imagined when she found, as the reader will have anticipated, not only the kaimyō name of Ito, which was not familiar to her, but also his crest, which she recognised instantly, inscribed on the square sail.

Zuri turned cold with apprehension—dead? Was Ito dead? But an instant later, when she had controlled the thought, she realised how absolutely impossible it was that Ito should have died, leaving her soul insensible to the fact. The

girl apprehended her own awakened psychic faculties too well not to know that it would be as impossible for the breeze to sweep the strings of an Æolian harp and emit no response, as for her spirit to remain insensible to the passing of so beloved a soul.

There had been, as yet, no telepathic intercourse between Ito and herself, because his psychic senses were still unroused, and she knew that a "receiver" was as necessary as a "transmitter" for the exchange of such intercourse. This is as true on the mental as it is on the physical plane.

Zuri, however, harboured no manner of doubt that the time would come, and that even if his spiritual awakening was not achieved in this life, Death would assuredly accomplish it. No, Ito was not dead, and there must have been some ghastly error.

Could it be that he had purposely so impressed his parents, to spare them the shame a knowledge of his guilt would entail? Again, no, as the deceit would inevitably be eventually exposed.

Crouching upon the bank, the girl proceeded

to re-adjust the rigging of the little ship, and further examination convinced her that it had been the handiwork of Ito's mother. Evidently she, if not both the parents, believed her son to be dead, though by what means she had been so misled Zuri was at a loss to conjecture.

In any case, she must not frustrate the evident desire of the mother, so, the work of restoration completed, Zuri rekindled the little lantern from one that illuminated an urn near at hand. Then, with an inward prayer too sacred for repetition, she pressed her face caressingly against the sail, and choosing a propitious spot, re-launched the pretty ship and bade it goodspeed upon its way.

Long after it was lost to view the girl might still have been seen in the familiar Japanese posture, resting upon her heels by the moonlit riverside.

Strong thoughts, too deep for either tears or words, coursed through her brain, masked by the serenity of her beautiful patient face! Winged thoughts—the saving power of which none but the angels knew!

CHAPTER XXI

ZURI SETS FORTH ON A LONELY PILGRIMAGE,
AND ENCOUNTERS A DYNAMIC FORCE UN-
KNOWN TO OUR THEOLOGY

IN no other country in the world are more winsome babies to be found than in Japan! At Festivals, they brim over with happiness as they clamber up the temple steps, to be lifted, radiant with the triumph of their ascent, in the arms of their mothers to greet their own particular god Jizō, who will rescue their souls from demons, if they nestle within his sleeves or cling fast to his extended staff.

The gaiety prevalent everywhere was contagious, and would have stirred the most morbid misanthrope to some response.

Zuri, though distinctly "out of tune with mirth when all her life was grey," obeyed never-



ZURI SETS FORTH!

theless the dictates of her environment, and suppressing her sorrow entered into the happiness of those around her.

Why should the fête of the dead be sad when they are still living? and why should a Japanese grieve as deeply as a Christian, who so often sorrows without hope? The flights of the temple steps were fringed with booths, laden with paper trifles, and the children clamoured for miniature banners, or toys that could be bought for the equivalent of a farthing.

Zuri ransacked the folds of her obi for sen to spend on the little ones she knew, and even on those she did not know. At times she clasped their little hands and led them apart from the crowd, to nooks among the pines, disused Hakabas, wherein rested the remains of former generations.

There she showed the little ones how to ignite the incense sticks, and where to deposit them on the forgotten graves.

Whenever she came across an image of Jizō, which, however grotesque, always had a kindly

face, she would tell the children stories of their Protector, and teach them how to build pyramids of pebbles at his feet, naming some departed baby friend with each additional stone.

It was on such occasions that poignant memory recalled her own childish experiences with Ito in the performance of this custom. Was it possible he had forgotten all this? and, fighting down that intrusive swelling of the throat that preludes tears, Zuri would turn away with her little charges, and consign them to their parents' care. Then she would watch them led away, with acknowledgments and bows, by proud and happy mothers, and realise, as in a living picture, the domestic heaven she had forfeited by her unswerving devotion to the Pathway of the Gods.

"Better so!" she murmured. "I can at least meet unshamed the eyes of my honoured father in the Meido whither all ways merge."

The morning which succeeded the night when Zuri had visited the riverside dawned brilliantly, and the girl was up in time to see the sun bestow his first smile on the verdant valleys of Agat-

sumagawa. Her preparations for her pilgrimage to the Temple of Haruna were soon completed.

Two little boxes of purely white wood, one packed with rice ready cooked, the other with "Daikon" and various other vegetables in slices, contained her lunch. The boxes were tied neatly together with a piece of ribbon, a pair of new wooden chopsticks being strapped ready for use on the lid.

These she placed in a handkerchief with another parcel enveloped in embroidered silk.

Zuri little realised the sweet picture she presented as she traversed the valley. She wore a plain white kimono of cotton crepe most serviceable in texture, but the beautiful hereditary obi encircled her waist, indicating her rank, and hidden in its evasive folds lay the case that contained her money. There was no covering upon her head, but as she wandered on she picked an early blossom of the glorious golden *lilium auratum* and placed it in her hair.

The period for the rains was over, but though

supposed to have departed, they sent back scouts in the form of violent storms.

The persistent cry of the cicada was a warning to pilgrims that their fury was not quite spent.

The ground was still muddy in places, but Zuri wore high wooden "geta," which so successfully raised her feet from contact with the soil that not one splash defiled the snowy "tabi" or socks in which they were first encased. She carried a large Japanese umbrella made of oiled paper, a famous shield against both rain and sun. It had been quaintly painted with her insignia, and made a picturesque feature of her costume.

Although some time had elapsed since Zuri had visited the Temple, she needed the direction of no guide, and luxuriated in the exercise and natural beauty surrounding her.

The valleys were positively jewelled with flowers, especially the Iris in many varied shades, also specimens of the Spirea and Tiger-lily. The season was too advanced for the birds to be heard to the best advantage; they do not *sing*

so much in Japan, as thrill the atmosphere with vibrations.

The Koma was still doing his utmost to make music in this way, but his warbling is always produced *pianissimo*, and is seldom appreciated as it deserves.

Zuri reached the margin of the lake of Haruna without having encountered a soul by the way. Here she paused to make ablutions and partake of her food, and then, relieved by the weight of the dainty boxes, she braced herself, after resting a while, to toil up the formidable steps—of *Tenjin-Toge*.

When she gained the summit, after a protracted climb, she stood a thousand feet above the level of lofty Ikao, and after admiring sufficiently the glorious prospect that included it, she turned her back upon it and stayed yet a moment to gaze with awe down her onward path, which must lead her now into the yawning throat of the Gorge.

By this time the glory of the morning had departed, and Zuri noticed with dismay a frowning

mass of inky cloud that was lowering and condensing till it threatened to envelop the Gorge.

The girl shuddered, as well she might, when a sullen distant growl proclaimed some evil intentions later on. She resolved to hasten, but paused first to unpack a pair of zōri, or straw sandals, and replace her geta by them. Thus prepared she was more suitably shod to pick her way between the disordered boulders that impeded the rugged descent. The track was spiral, and continued alternately to confront and withdraw her from the verge of the roaring torrent.

It rushed past her, foaming forth its rage with such an uproar that it almost quenched the distant warning growls of the threatening tempest.

Like Una, Zuri had not yet met the lion she could not calm, figuratively speaking, by laying her hand upon its head, but now Nature had a contrary experience in store for her.

The coming storm was lashing the elements into a mood that might easily cow the bravest spirit. The weird pinnacles of rock towered ever blacker and higher above her head at every

turn as she crept cautiously down the precipitous descent that led to their bases.

They seemed to take the shape of demoniacal Apollyons, rising to annihilate her for the presumption of her intrusion.

Fortunately for her, Zuri was no fugitive Orestes with a remorseful conscience that insisted on converting these freaks of Nature into pursuing furies.

Yet, despite her cultured understanding, and perhaps, more correctly speaking, because of it, she inclined towards the traditional belief which asserted these unique rocks to have been the gigantic figures of past masters of the Black Art, who, presuming to charge down upon the settlement of the White Brotherhood at Haruna Temple, had been petrified and rooted thus in mid-career by the adept power of the latter. The sombre gloom cast by these numerous trophies of Nemesis could not fail to depress our pilgrim, and her heart beat violently when a flash of lightning illumined their stern crests, which was followed by reverberating bursts of

thunder, some of these being dangerously suggestive of the crack of artillery. Her dread was, that a deluge would follow before she could take the darkest plunge, and escape from between the jaws of the cliffs into the recess of the cryptomeria forest which terminated the gruesome descent.

Springing lightly from rock to rock, which her sandals safely gripped, she pitted her speed against that of the coming deluge and won, but almost at the cost of her life.

Soon after entering the forest an appalling outburst of lightning temporarily blinded her, and this was followed by a still more appalling crash which vibrated the earth beneath her feet, and finally stretched her prostrate upon the ground. A stalwart pine had been struck, and her garments were nailed down by the debris of the noble tree, which had barely fallen clear of her.

Lying thus, until she had recovered somewhat from the dizziness engendered by the shock, Zuri at length opened her eyes, and found herself a prisoner, pinioned fast to the earth by massive branches and absolutely unable to move. Her

head was fortunately uninjured, as it had fallen imbedded in the soft thick moss that abounded in her vicinity. She therefore preserved her senses, and was presently able to glance anxiously around.

Then, indeed, the poor girl perceived herself to be in evil case. The tree had been struck by lightning, and was on fire, which was consuming it gradually.

Just as Zuri became aware of the awful fact, she saw to her horror that the fire was making its way towards her, creeping on, to ignite the extended skirt of her kimono. Lying quite helpless, debarred from the use of her hands, escape, which might have been possible had her arms remained free, was now quite out of her power.

With horror-fascinated eyes Zuri watched the flames slowly but surely augment, and realised the awful truth that a few minutes would suffice to envelop her bodily within them.

Oh that the deluge she had dreaded would break forth ! The desire accentuated itself into

an inward supplication that became an agony of appeal.

Still the fire crept stealthily towards her, till a scorching pain in one of her arms set a seal to her despair, and momentarily expecting death she exclaimed aloud, " Most August Lord Amida, condescend to receive my unworthy departing soul ! "

Then a strange thing happened. There was no apparent sign of any answer, and yet a great wave of peace flowed over the girl's spirit, her fear was calmed, and she knew some one had been sent to save her.

There was a sound,—was it not a call ? Surely a voice had responded to her appeal !

Raising her head as much as possible, Zuri looked beyond her immediate surrounding and saw, standing with arms extended upwards, a white-robed, majestic figure. The impedimenta of blazing branches barred any nearer approach, but the voice commenced intoning, in accents of imperious command, an ancient invocation or " Mantra " never successfully interpreted as

yet, although it has been rediscovered by the energy of modern research, and set aside as an unsolved enigma !

The instant the Mantra had been enunciated, in sonorous tones that varied with every syllable, the restrained rain broke freely forth. Descending copiously, but not furiously, it beat back the advancing flames, eventually totally extinguishing them. The cool drops falling plentifully on Zuri's face assuaged the feeling of suffocation that was beginning to overwhelm her.

The girl closed her eyes with a sigh of thanksgiving, and presently she felt that strong hands were rending her kimono free from the detaining branches.

In a few moments more she was carefully raised from the ground by the protecting arms of Hannushi San, High Priest of Haruna, and borne, a rescued life, to the threshold of his dwelling.

CHAPTER XXII

A GLIMPSE 'NEATH THE VEIL OF THE THRICE HOLIEST SUN-GODDESS, AMA-TERASU

ABSOLUTELY uninjured, save that one arm was severely scorched, Zuri was assiduously tended by the wife and daughter of the High Priest of Haruna.

Her nervous system recovered in a few hours from the severity of the shock, owing to an undisturbed night of sleep which Hannushi San secured for her by means of a herbal draught he had caused to be specially infused as a sedative.

Zuri was on her feet next day, resolute against all persuasion brought to bear on her by her sympathetic hostess. The fact was, she was craving for the private interview with Hannushi San, on which she had set her heart before starting on her pilgrimage to the Shrine.

When at length it was granted her, she saw that, although she owed him her life, he would accept nought that savoured of exaltation for the deed.

"Ascribe the rescue to the Source whence the strength to effect it was derived," Hannushi San said to her when she made her lowly prostration before him in ordinary greeting. So Zuri was silenced before she could even voice her gratitude,—and indeed she knew that her rescue was due to no "miracle," such as it might seem to the ordinary mind.

The Words of Power that had drawn down the rain had simply set into motion by their peculiar sounds the hidden laws of vibration which control such an issue. The result was due to no other "magic," than the White Magic—which had amassed sufficient wisdom from untiring research into the invisible forces, to control the elements. The action was *super-normal*, but not *super-natural*.

Zuri had never seen any display of the kind before, because the High Priest bound himself by an obligation only to exercise such knowledge

for the saving of life, never for his own personal interests—or for the gratification of the curious.

“ I sensed your approach, my daughter,” he observed, “ and in view of the impending storm came forth to meet you. Now we are alone, and you are at liberty to question me about all that is weighing anxiously on your heart.”

He motioned his guest towards some cushions on which she sank, and, placing himself near her, signed to the attendants to withdraw after serving her with tea. Then, when they had done so and departed, closing the shōji after them, he made a signal to Zuri to begin.

“ I desire to inform you, oh illustrious and justly venerated one, that which your supreme intelligence may have already divined.” Here her lip trembled, and she paused for renewed self-control. “ I have deliberately broken my troth with Ito San, because he has forsaken the Way of the Gods ! ” “ *Kami-no-Michi.* ”

“ I know, my daughter,—distress not yourself to explain ; I know it, and grieve deeply in spirit for him, but not for you. And now trouble not

yourself with superfluous language; we will dispense with the honorifics custom imposes, and discourse together—soul with soul ! ”

Zuri bent her head assentingly.

“ Those who forsake may also return—is it probable in his case, think you, oh Revered One ? ”

The High Priest noted the sudden flash of hope that kindled in the eyes of the girl as she spoke, but he esteemed her too highly to foster it. He shook his head doubtfully.

“ A man’s steps on the Path, are subject to the amount of volition freely granted him ; he is no automaton, and all the while his will is perverted, it forceth him to stray.”

“ But,” pleaded Zuri, “ you, oh Master of Wisdom, drew Ito’s horoscope as a babe, will you not confide in me what course of conduct the planets foretell ? ”

Hannushi San smiled. “ Daughter,” he said, “ the popular idea of Kismet is a distortion of the Truth. There is no course fixed by the planets, because there are no circumstances the will of man cannot palliate, and only two

events that are inevitably fixed—the hours of Birth and Death. All that lies between as regards the career of a man can merely be sketched in, as the probable outcome of his inherited tendencies ; but it is not sufficiently remembered that his will may change the entire complexion of these, by mastering them.”

“ Then we are not the inevitable bond-slaves of our *igwa*,” said Zuri, with relief.

“ Daughter, to think so, is a false conclusion of the lower mind. The higher Wisdom teacheth that we are bound to nothing save the wheel of Life and Death—and evidently even freedom from these will lie in the decisions of our future adept lives. It is thus that Christs are made.

“ Remember the words of the Indian Buddha : ‘ Ye are not bound,’ he says ; ‘ the soul of things is sweet : stronger than woe is will,’ and again, to our lasting comfort : ‘ Ye suffer from *yourselves* ; none else compels ! None other holds you, that ye whirl upon the wheel, and hug and kiss its spokes of agony.’ ” ¹

¹ Translation from *The Light of Asia*, by Sir Edwin Arnold.

Zuri was startled to find some tears stealing down her cheeks. "Then it means that I may hope," she murmured, "but I must not build my life upon the possibility of Ito's return."

"That is well," assented Hannushi San, seeming not to see the tears, but only the brave sweet smile that followed them as the girl added: "I am about to offer at the shrine the object I esteem most precious."

"That also is well," repeated the High Priest, "so that you forget not to place your own will with it, at the disposal of the Gods."

"In truth I could bear it better," Zuri continued, "had Ito adopted the Christian faith because he approved it; but he is as callous to that as he is to his own, and the change was wholly one of expediency, though Mr. Thompson and the English lady are blind to this. Why, I myself care for, and believe in, their Jesus more than Ito does! Surely, oh Honourable One, you cannot fail to revere One so truly Divine?"

"Most assuredly," was the reply, "that this

Jesus is God I hold no manner of doubt, and there is no reason why we should not honour Him as such, and include Him with our own. It is the Christians themselves who will not suffer us so to do, but expect us to be renegades to our own religion when accepting the truths that exist in theirs. They recognise not the imperative need that all religions should give and take from one another, in brotherly fellowship, even as we received Igwa from Buddhism ! They imagine Christianity holds a monopoly of Truth, which can never be the case with any one religion."

"The Christians scorn and insult our Gods," exclaimed Zuri indignantly, "and assure us they are false. They assert their own to be the only 'Way,' believing all other paths lead down to hell."

"Ah ! Therein they greatly err, my daughter. Our illustrious Hirata hath most truly said, 'To know that there is no "Way," this is truly to have learned the "Way of the Gods" !' Therein lies a mysterious aphorism the depths of which

we have by no means fathomed. All theologies are man-formed limitations, only serviceable for immature souls. No aspiring spirit can be for ever held down in a mould of clay ! But there is hope for Christianity inasmuch as it is the youngest of the great religions, and its dogmas will fail to stay the march of its spiritual progress amidst its followers, even as the husk fails to imprison the kernel that expands.

“ We of the Shintō Faith have no anathemas to hurl at Ito—no ‘ eternal fire,’ in which to damn his soul for so treacherously forsaking us. The day will come when remorse will awake within him, and that will prove its own sufficient hell ! It will be your opportunity also, my daughter, either in this life or another.”

“ May the Powers grant it here and now ! ” exclaimed Zuri fervently. “ My one terror when so near death yesterday lay in the fear that I should not be permitted this chance.” There was a pause, and then she went on fervently : “ Tell me, Hannushi San most Honoured, you who are wise in researches of spirit respecting

the Avatas of the world, what do you personally hold concerning the Christians'—Jesus ? ”

“ I have said, my daughter, that I believe He was in truth God, by which I mean He was the Manifestation of Vishnu or the mystic Christ. As He represented Himself, so was He ! but not the one His followers grossly conceive. I believe He was one of the great Avatas, that He came to set forth in human embodiment the loving character of the Supreme. Perhaps He was the greatest, inasmuch as He was the latest, coming after Osiris, our own Amida, Krishna, and the Buddha of India. These are all Christs, my daughter ; but heed me well when I say they are more or less Christs *according to the capacity of the souls who receive them.* ”

“ What am I to understand by that in regard to your own belief, if you will pardon my importunity, oh Revered One ? ”

Hannushi San was silent a moment, and when he again spoke there was radiant assurance in his eyes, and steadfast conviction in his tone that impressed his hearer with his absolute sincerity.

“ You are to understand, my daughter, that I desire after death to make the negative confession of an early Egyptian ; that is to say, I desire to speak like him to the Weigher of my heart, and declare that ‘ *I have not denied God in any of His manifestations !* ’ Deep within me lies a subtle conviction that satisfies my own intuition, even although it does not convince my human understanding. It is this—that all these glorious Avatas are embodiments at different world-periods of the same Christ Soul.

“ Does not the oracle declare:- ‘ From the Paternal Source nought but the Perfect spins ’ ? ”

“ You have given utterance to my own secret hope,” exclaimed Zuri joyfully. “ Even I have dared to believe it possible that the World-Saviours are One ! Such a faith as this would surely put an end to religious persecution and bigotry.”

“ Alas ! ” replied the High Priest, “ it will have to be realised first by the majority before it proves a mantle of unity to pacify the world.

We owe our religion to no existing nation, least of all to China, as many suppose. Whence we came, which no advanced philologist has decided, thence we brought it—divinely inculcated by our Ancestors, the Illustrious Ones. The eyes of my spirit read not fully as yet the perfected records of Akasa, but I *know*”—and his tone grew triumphant—“that in that far-away period of time, still deemed fabulous by mankind, when the majestic billows and waves of the Atlantic were set in the mould and configuration of land, ancestors of our own were contributors to the civilisation there existing, and were among the few who persisted in the Path of Morality, and who therefore escaped the cataclysm that eventually submerged the Atlantean Race !

“ My daughter, our religion may be reformed and rejuvenated, but never *denied*, for it is founded on two deathless truths which Materialism has done its utmost to smother—the Immanence of Divinity in nature, and the indestructibility of the spirit in man.”

“ Even when trying to convince one another that we have found Truth,” exclaimed Zuri, “ how strangely we human beings persist inwardly in questioning it ! ”

Hannushi San paced the room once, then turned and stood before Zuri. His face was serene despite the deep seams of thought that interlined it.

“ My daughter,” he said at length, “ you have pilgrimaged in former years to the Naikū shrines at Ise, and have witnessed the ceremony of Senayo ; you know how deeply we venerate the sacred Mirror of the ever-glorious Ama-Terasu Goddess of the Sun ”—here the Priest paused to bow low and reverently—“ which we keep for ever concealed in many coverings there. You also know that we revere the Mirror because the ever-blessed goddess alone found satisfaction when she discovered the reflection of her own face in looking therein. These things are an allegory, oh my daughter ; have you any clear interpretation of them in your mind ? ”

“ Indeed, oh Wise One,” said Zuri humbly, “ I do not dare to say.”

“ Know, then, that this Mirror figures Truth, swathed in the innumerable wrappings in which our Ancestors have from reverence secreted it ! Remove one, remove many ! yet veil after veil remains ! But she, the Sun Goddess, the Eternal Feminine who figures Intuition, has penetrated to the Mirror’s disk ! and they, the risen Avatas, have also looked within, and they have left us in varied religions a record of what they beheld—and what they beheld is a still deeper mystery by no means fully solved. Evolution is already a half-revealed truth which is spreading through the world, but there is a deeper truth still concealed, and that is the fact of *Involution*.

“ The Avatas perceived it because they penetrated to the disk of the spirit. They saw ”—the High Priest added with solemnity—“ they saw the Macrocosm centred in the Microcosm—that is what they saw ! ”

“ Condescend to enlighten my ignorance,

Master," said Zuri, "for even now, oh Wise One, I fail to understand."

"Man is the Microcosm, my daughter; that is to say, he is an epitome of the entire universe, which is the Macrocosm. Man can only comprehend the universe when he discovers a true reflection of himself,—hence the allegory conveyed by our Mirror,—the deeper truth of Involution still remains. It is only the overflow of wisdom that can be gathered by the outward intellect. He who desires to obtain its essence must draw from the fathomless depths of his own spirit! When he has done that, he will find himself face to face with a more profound and evasive mystery still—the *Image of his God*. The trouble is, my daughter, that this Image, which is in us all, is at first sight so distorted. It is—thrown out of due proportion, as it were—like the broken reflections one sees of one's own person when reflected upon moving water. This is how it was that the great Zeus became visualised by the Greeks into a tyrant to trouble mankind.

"To each human being who attains the vision,

the Image is reflected differently, because he can only perceive it according to the point of *involution* he has gained. The higher the soul has soared—or rather, the deeper it has plunged into its own being—the grander will be the Image of its God, until that Image attains dimensions that prohibit any material reproduction by chisel, or brush, or language of the tongue ! ”

“ It is thus, thou Revered One,” said Zuri, “ that I would fain search after Him, if haply I but gain a broken glimpse in the shrouded mirror of my inmost spirit, which I know is of His essence, because it sprang from Him. Comfort me, oh my Teacher,—shall I ever attain ? ”

“ All souls,” responded Hannushi San, with his reassuring smile, “ shall reach the sun-lit peaks, as the Indian Avata asserted, but only those of the pure in heart, as said the Christians’ Christ, can see the ‘ Face ’ of God ! ”

He extended his hands over the head of the young girl, who had fallen on her knees, and then she listened with awe to the voice of his spiritual being, with which this priest spoke at

rare intervals. Not as the mouthpiece of some obsessing intelligence did he speak, but from the wide perception of his own highly evolved soul !

“ Persevere, my daughter, in the course you have so bravely chosen. I see your path beset with thorns that will bruise your feet, and it may be that the sacrifice of your bodily life will afford you swift advance. Be of good cheer ! Your footsteps are planted in *The Way*, and if the last step be taken, it will, rest assured, draw you within the radius of the Eternal Father’s smile.”

CHAPTER XXIII

THE AT-ONE-MENT OF THE MANY IN THE HEART OF THE WHOLE

AN interval ensued during which the High Priest silently resumed his seat, and Zuri sank back upon her cushions thoughtfully pondering his words.

They seemed to her pregnant with mystic meaning, and much that he had said called forth all her spiritual capacity to grasp. Presently she asked—

“Tell me, Hannushi San, why we have cumbered our religion with so many representations of the Gods ?

“The Christians call them our Idols, and I often feel I should have a better chance when pleading with them if this was not the case.”

“It was not always so, my daughter. You

and I know, as the Chaldæan oracle confirmeth, that in every Cosmos there shineth a Triad, of which a Monad is sole Source. Images came in with decadent forms of Buddhism. The original Shintō Faith would tolerate none of them. We are not the only religion that, in order to enable the uncultured mind to grasp the fundamental truth of Divinity in Nature, has clothed the elements in the form of gods. All religions are under the necessity of making their appeal to the masses of the people, and the Roman branch of Christianity has done the same by materialising its saintly men into idols, so that they may be worshipped and their assistance invoked.

“To you and me such beings as Ebisu Daikoku, Benten, Fukurokuju, Bishanon, Jurojin, and Hotei have no distinct personality, but to the vulgar they are gods of luck, and at least compel them to ascribe their good fortune to invisible powers.”

Zuri sighed. “I wish I could make this clear to Pauline Erskine, the English lady

missionary. She is so clever and brave in her defiance of whatever I say."

"The wise man," remarked Hannushi San, with quiet humour, "and also the wise woman, will never 'compass sea and land, to make one proselyte,' in fear of promoting the concluding clause of that astute saying. Spiritual evolution cannot be hastened with safety. It is an affair of growth."

"I should like Miss Erskine to hear you quoting her Bible, Honoured Master," said Zuri, with a smile. "She thinks we are quite ignorant about it, and she has more faith in it than even in her God."

"Ah!" went on the High Priest, "the Christian Bible is very grand, but they are wrong who think it the only Scripture in the world. There are many others quite as inspired."

"But if inspired, how is it there is so much in it that is inhuman and cruel?"

"All scriptures contain much that is inhuman and cruel, and that part is not inspired at all, my daughter, in the highest sense. Scriptures

resemble gold-mines, and inspiration runs through much matter that is as quartz to the precious vein of the metal. Our own Kojiki, handed down at first verbally from primitive times, is no exception to this rule. The student must learn to discern by applying what he reads to the light of his intuition. For instance, is it possible the Supreme Father could be the unjust God the Jews represented Him—a God who delighted in the blood of their enemies, inclusive of innocent nations? They limited and degraded the Holy One by the distorted Image of Him they saw in their minds, and for this they are now suffering a terrible igwa of persecution.”

“ Yet the last great Avata, Jesus, chose to be born a Jew,” said Zuri meditatively.

“ Yes ! that Divine One incarnated into the most wilful nation in the human race in order to show them the true character of the All-Father. Alas that *I* should have to avow it ! but it is the priests of all religions who have eventually become their ruin.

“ The Sacerdotalists always martyred the

prophets because these saw with the spirit-eye and heard with the spirit-ear. They limited the Love of the Supreme until they blasphemed it by the name of Wrath. They introduced propitiatory sacrifices of blood, which is abhorrent to the Universal Father. It all sprang from love of power, my daughter—the ambition to rule the souls of men instead of guiding them.”

“The Christians’ Christ was never harsh save to Sacerdotalists and their kind,” remarked Zuri. “He accused them of keeping the key of heaven, and neither going in themselves nor suffering others to enter.”

“Yet,” continued Hannushi San, “directly after His death Sacerdotalism sprang back to life like a rampant weed, increasing in strength from generation to generation, till the High Priest of Rome crushed his co-equals, and his successors waded for centuries in blood to secure his material crown !”

“Oh Great One !” exclaimed Zuri, “why is so much terrible suffering allowed ? Have you

any key to offer to this awful problem of perpetual pain ? ”

“ No man has yet solved it, my daughter. Yet sure I am, because divinity is omnipresent in all that *is*, from stones to man, therefore the Deity also suffers with every creature He has generated, according to the degree of His consciousness that each contains.

“ In this thought alone we can find consolation. The All-Father does not stand afar off, coldly reviewing our agony, but suffers *in* us and *with* us every hour.”

“ So then we can say of cruelty, as Jesus said of kindness, ‘ Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it *unto Me.*’ Do you remember that, Hannushi San ? ”

“ I do, and I also recall another saying of His, which alone would have assured me of His divinity: ‘ Not a sparrow falls to the ground *without the Father* ’—that is to say, the essence of the Father that is in the sparrow falls with it and suffers as it suffers.

“ This is the explanation of the care for life in-

culcated both by Krishna and the Indian Buddha. 'Slay nothing needless,' says the former, 'lest ye stay the meanest thing upon its upward way.' And here again is the Krishna-Christ's glorious declaration of Divine Immanence: 'I make I unmake this Universe! All these hang on Me as hangs a row of pearls upon its string. I am the fresh taste of the water, I the silver of the moon, the gold of the sun! the thrill that passeth in the ether, the good sweet smell in moistened earth, the fire's red light, the vital breath, *moving in all that moves!*'¹

"That pain is educative, my daughter, I make no manner of doubt. It is inevitable in order to augment the Divine growth within—else would the Father of Love never suffer it."

"If your courtesy can bear with me a little longer," said Zuri, "I have still something more to ask. The Christians are so positive that there are actual places called heaven and hell. Do you find truth in this?"

"It is not their original idea," replied the

¹ Bhagavad-Gita. Translation by Sir Edwin Arnold.

High Priest, with a smile; "the Brahmans and Buddhists long before created ghastly hells. Fear them not, my daughter. Our primitive form of Shintō acknowledges no such places; they have been mostly devised by the decadent priests of all religions, to keep a whip-hand over the people. For much the same reason, the priests of Egypt, when their teaching had become degraded, professed to send souls backward into former stages of animals. Yet," he added musingly, "to those whose spirit-eyes can see and spirit-ears can hear, there are in the unseen realm around us many degrees of hell, ay, and of heaven too."

"What mean you by this contradiction, oh Master?" questioned Zuri.

"I mean that heavens and hells are *states*, although they are not 'places.' I mean that I myself have seen, in the so-called invisible realm, two souls side by side, one in a raging hell, the other in a radiant heaven. My daughter, heaven and hell are conditions of soul that may exist on both sides of death.

“ True indeed was the exclamation an English poet put in the mouth of a being sent in quest of such ‘ places,’ who returned with the assertion : ‘ I myself am heaven or hell.’

“ The life lived by the soul makes one or the other, and the priest does not exist who can drag a soul out of hell or thrust one into heaven—save the priest of that soul’s free-will. Yet good it is, as our illustrious Ieyasu has written, ‘ Stand ye in awe of the unseen, and that will keep thee from going wrong.’ Cease not to ask, my daughter—to the eyes of the pure is the truest vision given.”

“ Then pardon my ignorance, and I will speak yet once again,” assented Zuri. “ There are rare occasions ”—and the girl’s voice grew subdued —“ when I, despite my unworthiness, have distinctly seen the shapes of several of our Illustrious Ones, and those whose bodily appearance when in the flesh I knew always bear a close though more ethereal resemblance to their former physical details. Think you the spirit achieves this through its power of desire ? ”

“ It certainly may be so, since thought is creative,” was the answer, “ but I incline to the belief that a form we see in that way is the counterpart of the body in finer matter, which always exists, and remains when the flesh-sheath is slipped off, and that is why, to the clear-seeing, it is so easily recognised. All religions of eminence are at one in this, only they call it by diverse names.

“ To the Indian it is the ‘ astral vehicle,’ to the Egyptian the ‘ Ka,’ while Paul the Christian calls it the spiritual *Body*, making his assertion the more forcible by saying: ‘ If there is a natural body, there is also a *spiritual Body*.’ It is not wonderful that we sometimes perceive it, it is more strange we do not do so oftener; for the invisible world is not far away, as many think, but envelops our own and penetrates it.

“ The souls with whom we are in affinity—both the Hotoke (perfected) and Shinbotoke (imperfected) dead—are specially with us now, as you know, during this festival. They draw as near as possible to us for a while, in the anxious hope

of finding themselves still beloved and unforgotten."

"And in regard to communion with them?" questioned Zuri, not because she doubted, but because she wished to draw forth a personal opinion.

"My daughter, trust not for this," responded the High Priest earnestly, "to any outside medium, save only the intuitive witness your own soul supplies. Even so, the sincerest are liable to deception, for the Invisible Realm is full of non-human entities, many of which are past masters in the power to deceive, by glamour, and will often personate the souls we desire to interview with disastrous results to be experienced to our cost. Be not over-desirous for communication of this kind, for the very wish is a challenge to such creatures, and thereby many a soul has surrendered itself to betrayal and subsequent misery, even madness."

"I need no warning, my Master, in regard to this," said Zuri. "I have never yielded myself to become a highway for unknown spirits—I have

always shrunk from trance experiments, and always shall."

"I know you have so far, and rejoice that it is so, my daughter. There are attempts, of which you know nothing, to induce spirits to materialise so as to be observed physically. Those who succeed degrade them by drawing them back to earth-bound conditions, and are mistaken in supposing by so doing they bring them closer to their hearts. For them, the farther they are removed from us in body the nearer can they approach us in soul; and it is only in soul communion that there can be any true satisfaction. That this glorious possibility is true, the scriptures of all religions bear undeniable witness! But the day now begins to wane, and if you would ascend to the Honden, my daughter, and make your offering before nightfall, you should have already started on the way."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MYSTIC BIRD OF THE GODS FULFILLS HIS MISSION

THE Gorge of Tenjin-Toge had presented an abnormal appearance the whole day, and now, as the sun declined, it was a strain on the nerves of adult pilgrims, and specially those of the children, to pursue their way down into its yawning jaws, that looked as if cleft open with a herculean hammer, ready to receive them !

Surely at any moment a "Tengu," which all the Japanese world knows to be a long-nosed goblin ! might pounce upon them from the darkening corners. It was the concluding day of the festival, and belated pilgrims were being carried hurriedly down in "kagos" slung on poles, while younger members pressed closely on their tracks behind them.

When Zuri, after an arduous climb in the opposite direction, stood alone at the threshold of the sacred Honden, or principal shrine, she turned to gaze down upon the descending crowd, all of whom seemed to have deposited their offerings save herself. They looked like a procession of fire-flies when they lighted up their lanterns and carried them swinging and glowing into the deepening dusk of the gorge.

Vendors of decorations, Okazari-yu, were departing with the residue of their wares, and this included the paraphernalia for decorating the booths. There were samples of primitive pottery, paper flowers which bloomed on being plunged in water, little oxen, and horses made of straw, and tiny bamboo cages with a cricket in each ! All were wending their way back to Ikao, though many would spend the night curled up together when they reached the valleys below if their strength gave out before gaining a tea-house where they could remain till dawn. The temple buildings stood, as before described, at varying

levels, each being alone accessible by a flight of leg-breaking steps, hewn from the cliff.

The carving which is sheltered beneath the widespreadeaves of Haruna, though not gorgeously painted like the sculpture for which Nikko is famous, exhibits even greater display of genius. The self-coloured wood is made to express the most weird incidents of mediæval life. Carved in high relief are Daimyōs fully armed, paying ceremonial visits to the priests, while other scenes depict happy-faced hermits experiencing ecstatic visions, their varying expression being delineated with the utmost versatility of touch and skill.

Redeemed though the temples were by the Shintō reformation, no rude iconoclastic grasp had in any way disfigured them, for religions clasp hands instead of doubling fists, in Japan. Glancing below, the awful sternness of the situation was relieved by the crested trunks of the stately avenue of *Cryptomeria*.

It seemed to Zuri at this elevation as if she was completely isolated from mankind, and the

waning light recalled her to the necessity of presenting her offering before darkness descended upon her.

Slipping off her sandals, she drew close to the shrine—so scrupulously cared for in every detail of its appointments that not one speck of dust dared rest on its polished corners. Zuri's "ofuda," or "arrow of prayer," was already written, but, crouching on her heels, she raised her sweet eyes higher than the "altar," above which, so her patient spirit whispered, waited the ever-open ear of the All-Father.

There her heart throbbed forth her fervent petition that yet was soundless, and, invoking the protection of the Ancestors, she clapped her hands twice, according to the usual custom, and rose to her feet.

Next, glancing round to make sure of being undisturbed, she opened the packet that contained her offering. It consisted of a single picture painted on wood, but it was the object she treasured most in the world. A simple picture, yet it combined originality of conception

with force of execution a trained artist might have envied, and that even an impossible perspective failed to consign to ridicule.

The subject was an ideal portrait of Kwannon, the Mother of Loving-kindness. Zuri certainly did not realise that the face resembled her own, idealised; and not even that of a Madonna on the walls of the Uffizi expressed more fully the divinity of Selfless Love. The artist had not overwhelmed the figure on this occasion with a disfiguring number of hands. Kwannon only possessed four: with two she was generously dispensing benefits, while the others were stretched forth from the folds of her silver kimono in an attitude of welcome to two distant forms.

The one farthest in the background, with reverently averted face, was thrusting forward a tottering baby child—no other than Zuri herself at the age of four. She was eagerly advancing with a trustful smile to cast herself into those kind extended arms.

Kwannon supplies the place of the Virgin Mary to the Japanese. She is the type of mother-love,

having voluntarily undertaken five hundred human incarnations from maternal devotion to her race.

The painting was priceless to Zuri, for it was the work of her beloved mother, who was dead. She was offering it now at the shrine because, in common with many a Christian Catholic, she believed that the surrender of some such treasured possession might ensure the acceptance of a petition.

After placing her picture on the highest lacquered step before the shrine, she kneeled on, absorbed, when she was roused by the consciousness of some approaching presence above her head. There was a distinct throbbing in the atmosphere, as if it was disturbed by the pulsation of wings. A thrill of apprehension made the girl shudder from head to foot. Then a long-drawn wail ensued. "Hoto-to-gi-su! Hoto-to-gi-su!" was the import of the sound.

Hearing it for the first time in her life, Zuri nevertheless intuitively recognised it as the note of a mysterious bird known in tradition

by the name it voices in its cry, Hoto-to-gi-su.

This weird creature is neither a denizen of earth nor of the unseen Hades, which is designated Meido in Japan.

It comes from Shide, the intermediate space between the two, and never visits the earth-side save to summon a soul to Hades, and escort it thither when it is released by death.¹

Presently Zuri, involuntarily making use of those quickened soul-senses which sometimes awoke within her, raised her eyes, and *saw* this mystic Bird of the Gods !

It was notably a bird disembodied ; yet the outline of its graceful shape could be traced, though its form was more transparent than the film of the wing of the dragon-fly. As Zuri gazed, fascinated, she no longer doubted if the summons was intended for herself. The Bird did not appear to notice her, but remained poised above her head, its long pointed wings beating the air in a throbbing accompaniment to its call.

¹ See *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*, Lafcadio Hearn.

“ Oh, soul,” was the import of its cry, “ to return homeward is better ! Come home, soul ! come home ! ”

Any terror Zuri originally felt was soothed by the vision of it, for the head of the Bird resembled that of the Dove, and its eyes emitted soft rays of golden light that indicated its course. One thing was very certain, it was a harbinger of Love, not of Wrath, and Zuri ended by feeling almost mortified that it so completely ignored her presence.

How long the exquisite creature remained visible to her, she could never afterwards decide ; all too soon, so it seemed to her, the wail grew softer, gradually lessening as the Bird swept round the eaves of the temple, till entering the avenue of cryptomeria the call subsided, and passed completely away.

“ You are honoured, my daughter ; it is granted to few to see the form of the Hoto-to-gi-su, even if they sometimes hear its cry.”

Zuri started to her feet, and saw the upright figure of Hannushi San standing by her side.

She glanced at his calm, smiling face, and his presence was an infinite relief to her.

Trembling with humility she answered him—

“ It is the first time in my life I have ever heard or seen it, oh Revered One,” she replied.

“ Yet there is no need for dread, my daughter. It simply comes to emancipate some imprisoned soul from bodily thrall, and guide it safe through Shide, towards its appointed home.”

Then, turning silently away from the shrine, they began to retrace their steps together.

After a pause, Hannushi San inquired, with some anxiety apparent in his voice,—

“ Know you aught concerning the pilgrimage of our honourable friends, the parents of Ito San, my daughter? I am aware that they left Ikao together for this place, but their further movements are hidden from me, and they ought to have reached Haruna before this, even allowing for the delay their age would entail.”

“ I did not know they had left Ikao,” replied Zuri. “ I have not seen them since the departure of their son. I purposely refrained from visiting

them until I had consulted with your wisdom as to the manner in which the painful truth would be best approached on my part. I am not aware to what extent they are already informed respecting the conduct of Ito."

"I have had some communication with Kanin San," said the High Priest, "and I find he knows the whole of the bitter truth. It seems his son betrayed himself unconsciously by leaving the Kamidana in a state of neglect and desecration in his own house, which he forsook, after avoiding a personal interview with his father."

"He was not diplomatic in his course of behaviour, as the result proved, for he did not foresee that his parents, actuated by anxiety on his behalf, would penetrate into his abode and discover the deserted shrine. This sufficed to convey the whole circumstances to the mind of Kanin San as if by full confession."

"But the poor mother?" exclaimed Zuri.

"To the mother, whose devoted love could not compass any suspicion of treason, the desecrated Miya served as positive proof of her son's death—

and this conviction I am pledged to her husband to preserve, as he rightly realises that belief in the death of Ito will prove to her the lesser agony."

"He is right," replied Zuri sadly; and as she spoke she saw mentally the little ship struggling out on its solitary voyage, laden with the indestructible prayers of the mother, and steered by her saving faith.

"I am also fulfilling a request from Kanin San, in acquainting you with his course of procedure," went on Hannushi San. "He entreats your honourable and true heart, during your future intercourse with his wife, to endorse all he would have her believe, and corroborate her misapprehension if ever occasion requires it."

"Tell him he can rely absolutely on my discretion," said Zuri; "but remember, my Honoured Master, that accident may at some time reveal the truth to her, and in such an event what is your counsel to me?"

"Leave the future to the guidance of the Gods, in whose wisdom it does not exist save as an

eternal Present. With them, there is no such thing as accident. We can but be wise up to the light of the moment, my daughter, even if finally, our precaution prove to be foolishness."

Bowing her head in assent, Zuri was half inclined to relate the incident of the wandering ship, but refrained, lest she should reveal the mother's secret—hitherto confided to no one.

At this instant they were startled by a pathetic cry for help, and their footsteps were brought to an abrupt pause.

CHAPTER XXV

THE VENERABLE SAMURAI CLEANSSES THE HONOUR OF HIS HOUSE

IN the course of their descent they were passing a declivity in the cliffs which sheltered a secluded and unfrequented shrine. Here votive offerings could be placed by any pilgrim who desired to avoid attracting the attention of the multitude.

No human being was visible in its vicinity save the solitary figure of a man seated before it in the motionless attitude of a Buddha, as if he, too, had been cast in bronze.

The cry had evidently not proceeded from him. In another instant, however, Zuri felt the skirt of her kimono grasped from behind her, and, turning, was just in time to catch an extended hand, and save from falling the very person for whom her thoughts had been exercised.

It was the aged wife of Kanin San, and she was trembling violently in her agitated efforts to overtake them.

At last she ejaculated faintly—

“ Oh, lend me your honourable help ! yonder, come ! ” then, breaking down utterly, she became incapable of further explanation.

Throwing one arm round her, Zuri supported the aged figure with words of soothing import till the moans of the mother were more subdued, and she reclined her head against the girl's shoulder.

Meanwhile the High Priest quitted them, and with hurried strides traversed the rocks that intervened, and gained the side of the living Buddha.

Could it be Kanin San ? Even after years of intimate acquaintance Hannushi San found himself asking the question. He leant forward to gaze on the features. Yes, certainly it was he, but the old Samurai seemed miraculously rejuvenated. Inasmuch as the posture would allow, his back was erect as in his younger days.

His feet, freed from his zōri and twisted beneath his knees, maintained the equipoise of the body without overstrain. He sat bareheaded, with his kimono draped gracefully round him in natural folds. The eyes were closed, according to his custom when practising meditation, and every line of anxiety and pain was obliterated from the rugged features. A smile of gratification lingered round the closed lips, from which all signs of sternness, so noticeable ordinarily, were momentarily effaced. The arms rested upon the thighs, and the strong sinuous hands, folded loosely together, hung nervelessly between the knees. The attitude and expression indicated satisfaction over some deed accomplished, or victory achieved.

After a protracted investigation the High Priest did a strange thing.

He withdrew a few paces, and prostrated himself as reverently before his disciple as if their respective vocations had been abruptly reversed.

The Samurai had evidently presented his

offering, for before him, on the ground in front of the shrine, lay his revered ancestral sword.

It was the same weapon which, as we know, he had carried with him, concealed in the folds of his kimono, to the surprise of his wife when they started on their pilgrimage to Haruna.

There it lay, an offering of expiation, the most costly his mind could devise—an expiation, offered not so much on account of the guilt of his son, as to atone for the outrage to those loyal Ancestors who had been dishonoured so shamelessly. The blade was in two halves, having been purposely snapped asunder.

Kanin San had decreed that never should it be bequeathed foully stained by treason, blurred as it was in places with blood that had been shed for his Emperor in fair and honest fight. By breaking it thus, the stern soldier had ensured that the hand of a renegade descendant should never desecrate its hilt.

To the experienced understanding of Hannushi San the motive of the act needed no explanation.¶

Marvelling at the force of a dominant will

which had braced the aged arms with strength to snap the tempered blade, the Priest realised that, in making this supreme effort, the noble heart had broken, and was now cold and still.

Raising his hands pressed together till the fingers pointed above his head, the High Priest murmured—

“The Gods accept thy offering, oh thou most honourable! Thou hast never deviated one footstep from the Way whither thy light indicated the path! Advance to become a Buddha! Be thou perfected!”

Then Hannushi San rose and retraced his steps to the spot where the sorrowing women awaited him.

“My daughter,” he said to Zuri, “the mystic Bird is even now accomplishing its mission; it has met the emancipated soul! Kanin San is on his way to the realm of the Hotoke, and sweet will be his welcome from the legions of the just.”

CHAPTER XXVI

THE INTERVENTION OF THE NEW WORLD IN THE PERSON OF EXCELSIOR

Two years later, when the London season is in full swing, we enter the mansion of a millionaire, and become invisible witnesses of a conversation between the host and his only daughter.

We find them seated *vis-à-vis*, before a sumptuous dessert, garnished with every delicate kind of fruit that was not in season. The servants in attendance had just withdrawn.

The daughter is a typical American, in the prime of her life and beauty. This was of the kind that Nature intended should be rather expansive, but the tendency had been sedulously toned down in the social conservatory of artificial culture.

The figure of the girl, splendidly developed,

was yet vigorously held in check at every angle with the despotism which is imposed by "smartness."

No bodily fault could be found in her as a perfected specimen of an American belle of the West, who had condescended for a season to alight in London and bewilder the heads of Englishmen. She averred that the limited confines of our tight little island caused her continual anxiety lest she should "fall off into space," nevertheless in England she contrived to exist for the present !

The sole blemish in the countenance of this fair American was the slight displacement of a pearly eye-tooth, owing to its persistent contact with fragrant cigarettes. She removed one now, in order to raise a voice which, though never shrill, had the timbre of fine wire strung at high tension.

" Say ! Porpa ! Now we are alone, are they objections, or are they reasons, that you wish to lay before me ? "

" Porpa " was a well-groomed, sleek-haired

specimen of the successful American citizen, honoured throughout the States. He had always been credited with obedience as a husband, and his daughter Excelsior traded on the fact, and rejoiced that her poor departed "Momma" had brought him up so well.

"They are either reasons or objections, whichever you like to consider them," replied Porpa, deprecatingly.

"Then I will hear them first and decide afterwards. Reel them off!"

"Reason number one," went on the father, quiescently; "the man is not a Prince of the Blood."

A rippling peal of laughter followed this announcement.

"Porpa, are you too innocent to live, or are you too fond and proud a father to believe, that were this the case the Emperor might possibly raise insurmountable obstacles? That is no valid objection; it is crass prejudice, or rather a reason the more in his favour. Times are off when even royal birth scores as eligible. Any

sane, up-to-date girl, like your daughter, Porpa," with a dimpling smile, "rides for *brains*, not rank, these days! Have I not been known to spurn even 'Strawberry Leaves,' because there was not any fruit to be found with them, until under the blast of my displeasure they shrivelled and withered away?

"For the rest, the blood of my chosen is as blue as pluck can make it. What can you demand more? Does he not spring from a race of Banner-bearing Samurai?—heroes who made it a practice to disembowel themselves whenever policy required it, with only a smile of apology for spoiling the carpet? I guess you can't beat that for dying up to style?"

"Ruled out," said Porpa with a sigh. "Reason number two: Ito San is poor."

"Well, now, but you have named one of the chief objects I have in marrying him! Don't I intend to have the whip-hand over the husband I select? What is the sense of being the reigning queen of a man's heart, if he holds the purse-strings in check? I'll either make my man, or

break him ! He must have wits, but I'll keep the varnish that polishes them ! ”

“ Reason number three : he is a man of alien race and religion.”

“ Well, now, I grant you, Porpa, I'm not in love with his complexion, but it has its advantage as a foil to the fairness of my own ! ” this with a glance at the reflection of her white neck in the mirror opposite. “ As for religion, well, don't try to come over me by emulating the Pecksniff of the old Dickens tradition. I know you too well for that cant to draw me for one single moment ! Why, Ito scores a point higher on the question of religion ! He has had the sense to make his conscience subservient to his ambition. What is the use of a conscience in diplomacy, I should like to know ? It plants a stumbling-block at every step of the career. The successful man is he who effaces it at first go off ; and now I come to think of it, Porpa,” with a sly twinkle, “ I have never once gotten so much as a glimpse of your own.”

Her father quenched another sigh in a laugh.

“ Ruled out again,” he said ; “ and now for reason fourth, the last and greatest : you will be taken so far away from me ! ”

Excelsior flicked away her cigarette, and laughed again, in a rippling treble. “ Why, Porpa ! Say ! You surely didn’t raise such a girl as I am to sit all my life on your hearthstone and warm your slippers ? You made your mighty pile by an original species of soft soap, what did you expect but that I should soar aloft on the biggest bubble I could blow out of it ? I guess it will have to be iridescent bubble, too ! warranted not to burst till it has set me down, whither I choose to steer it ! Have you nothing else to submit against my chosen husband ? No ? Well, then, it’s all level planning, and I bet you my bottom dollar that, when I enter his Imperial Palace at Tokyō, the Emperor of the Land of the Rising Sun will only be too anxious to squeeze my hand ! All you have to do now, Porpa, is to make your mind easy, and dump down the dollars ! ”

CHAPTER XXVII

AMBITION REPAYS ITS DEVOTEE

FROM the above conversation it will be evident that, in the case of Ito San, success had clasped hands with ambition.

His patron, Lord Ingram, had at once noted that the young man possessed diplomatic acumen, and promptly resigned him in order that he might be appointed to a post where it could be severely tested. The result had been his installation in the Service of Diplomacy. After this, his abilities were recognised by the Japanese Ambassador, and his rise became so rapid as to be almost unprecedented, his Government having by this time promoted him to the post of First Secretary to their Ambassador in London.

It was at this point in his career that the radiant Excelsior encountered him. She saw

at once that he was the favoured rising sun of the highest political circles in London—a man marked for future confidence by his own nation, and trusted by official heads in England. He was specially valuable, as Lord Ingram observed, because of his adoption of English religious convictions and tactics.

Excelsior was quick to see how complete was this young man's self-control when the tide of adulation swept over him. "Unlike most of his fellow-countrymen," she thought, "he never suffers from 'swelled head' for one single moment."

This was true; and the girl, with her accentuated national cuteness, also observed still more which escaped the general notice. Despite the diffidence of Ito and his modest depreciation of his own efforts, she saw ambition was his sole and ruling god, and knew that he had set a dominant will on the eventual attainment of the highest honours his profession could secure.

Money, she was aware, he needed, and perhaps from the fact that he was the only man of her

intimate acquaintance who had abstained from falling on his knees before her on this account, her spirit was stimulated to the exhilaration of achieving his capture. For the rest, "Give me," she averred to herself, "a keen political gamester in preference, any day, to a princely circumscribed fool."

So, as she remarked to her father, she resolved that Ito should be her own, "to make or break," whether he first fell a victim to her charms or not.

Upon this last point she could obtain no satisfaction. No, not even when the time came that he did deliberately walk into the advantageous matrimonial trap he quite realised she had spread for him. In her own mind the girl could never decide whether the admiration shining in those deep-set, narrow eyes, was only skin-deep or of more vital import. Secretly piqued, she resolved to accentuate it. His command of her language was so perfected, and his courtesy so flawless, that it seemed to conceal his actual individuality with a veil which she found as

impenetrable as a wall of adamant, and became, woman-like, more involved herself consequently.

Excelsior decided to have her wedding dress embroidered in Japan, and one day a discussion arose between them respecting the choice of flowers that were to be represented upon it. Presently the intending bride drew forth a lily from a vase.

"Say, Ito! what is the name of this flower in Japanese?" she inquired.

"We call it—Zuri," he answered, and there was a curious hesitancy in his voice, before he pronounced the last word, which Excelsior noted.

"Then this is the flower I shall select," she pronounced, in her usual emphatic tone of decision.

"Do not choose the lily," said Ito quietly, and as he spoke he drew it gently away from her grasp, and adjusted its ruffled petals with a tender touch that almost amounted to a caress.

"Say, and why not?" she questioned sharply.

Ito had turned aside his face, and was replacing

the flower in the vase. "It recalls the dead to me," he said calmly.

"I reckoned you had no 'dead' in Japan," she rejoined satirically, and in a fit of perversity inwardly resolved to order the flower of which he disapproved. "I guess it is as well to plant my foot down firmly on the first step of my own way," she thought silently, "*ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute.*"

Some months later, when the material for the dress had been returned with panels of tall lilies exquisitely embroidered upon it, in every posture of languid grace, Excelsior sent for Ito. With her eyes gleaming with mischievous triumph she shook out the magnificent folds of silk before him, but, shrewd as she was, she failed to see an ugly expression gleam dangerously in his eyes, which were veiled instantly by their lids. Had she seen it, it would have startled even her cool assurance.

"So you chose the lily after all," he observed carelessly.

"Why, sure!" she replied cheerily; "and I

have also decided to have their blooms thrown on my path to tread upon, instead of reverting to the hackneyed custom of rose-petals. Say, do you object still? If so, I'm sorry, but I cannot alter it."

"How can I object to anything that ensures you a triumphant march past?" was his answer. "But pardon me if I curtail my visit now, owing to an official summons," and bowing low over the hand, to which he pressed his lips, Ito took for the first time in the experience of his fiancée an abrupt leave.

He felt he had made his escape only just in time—in another moment he might have lost even his vaunted self-control.

There is a mystic spell bound up in the aroma of a flower, and ever since he had withdrawn the lily from the touch of Excelsior's hand, that spell had been cast on the heart of Ito, loosening every emotional chord within it. Memory, the trickster we often endeavour to slay, yet never kill, awoke from the aroma of the flower. His bride, his brilliant prospects, gratified ambitions,

all these became quite suddenly unreal, unsubstantial, illusory.

The only thing worth living for was that buried past, which unfolded anew before him from the scented bells of the lily, and he saw in a series of vivid mental pictures those dear lost faces he had refused by his conduct to keep for his own. Had those loved ones desired vengeance, they were at this moment avenged indeed.

The noble father, trusting mother, Zuri with her devoted love, each rose in turn confronting him—not as menacing visions, which he could better have borne, but enhanced by an expression of the steadfast love he had forsaken and betrayed.

Why did the scent of a lily waft back the pages of memory till he saw himself on the frontispiece of life, a proud and happy babe disporting his first smart kimono, or struggling to clutch his father's sword to support himself when his little feet were shod in "geta" for the first time?

Why did he see Zuri pale and wan, stretching

out imploring hands to draw him back to the pathway of the Gods ?

Could it be that, in spite of the practical scorn of shrewd material minds, there did exist some truth in the religion of his fathers, to his own irremediable loss ? If so, it was possible that the Master of the Christian Faith also acknowledged him not.

However this might be, night descended in blackness on the soul of Ito, and the success for which he had bartered love, honour, and happiness turned to dust and ashes ;—all this, through the aroma of a flower !

The wedding of these “ Favourites of Fortune ” became the sensation of that London season, and “ Excelsior ” hats, veils, parasols, and ribbons advertised in shop windows the popularity of the bride. The up-to-date girls of “ smart ” sets encouraged the little finger nails of their left hands to grow inordinately long, because Excelsior in a sudden freak had stated that she should introduce this Mongolian fashion to the court ladies of Japan. Obis, and kimonos

simply raged, fearfully and cruelly distorted by the hands of trade from their primitive grace of pattern.

At last the day arrived when Excelsior and Ito soared away in the Bubble of which the bride boasted, and which had been substantiated by Porpa into an admirably appointed "floating hotel." Ito was entrusted with an important mission to the Imperial Court, and Excelsior felt it incumbent upon her to land in Japan with the paraphernalia and caparisons that she believed would make an indelible impression on the Oriental mind, and enhance the dignity of their official position.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ALONE IN THE VALLEY OF SHADOWS

ZURI had, in the pathetic language of our Gospel, "beheld her mother" in the desolate widow of Kanin San. She "took her to her own home," and there, in so far as comfort could find its way into the bereaved heart, it was poured forth freely by the ministrations of the adopted daughter.

After the tragic circumstances in which we last saw them, the impressive funeral took place.

The body of the honoured Samurai was placed in the customary square palanquin made of white wood, in the same posture in which he had died.

Within, were many offerings of respect, and also the requisite roll of six *rin* placed there for the six Jizō who wait at the Path of the Shadows.

The followers carried gifts or lanterns, and

symbolic banners, while a priest headed the procession, ringing a bell. The mourners all wore hoods and were white-robed, except the widow, who followed the more ancient Shintō custom of wearing black. Strange to say, the Temple of Haruna, before a shrine of which Kanin San had died, chanced to be his hereditary temple.

The procession paraded the courts, after which the "kwan," or bier, was placed on the ground before the main entrance. The plaintive wailing of reed instruments and strings never ceased, and specially chosen Sutras were intoned.

The Priests of Haruna ignited sticks of incense, and took part by turn in long recitations. Every initial tone of each letter composing the kaimyō, or spirit-name of the dead man, had its appropriate verse chanted in unison.

Herein lies a mystery concerning which we in the modern world are profoundly ignorant, and that is, the psychological effect of vibrations, set in motion to accord rhythmically with the sound of a name, or even of one of the letters composing it! Harmonising results are pro-

duced in the soul-sphere which only those who have passed over, or can temporarily project themselves there, can understand.

Then followed the Saibun, which is an address made by the High Priest to the departed soul, who is rightly believed to have the powers of his understanding clarified by death. Hannushi San began by assuring Kanin San of the deep estimation in which he was retained in the memory of his friends, and the duty they felt incumbent upon them to carry out any of his honourable wishes. He ended by quoting a Chaldæan oracle :—

“ The Father does not sow Fear by means of death—but persuasion ! For the Self-Begotten One-Father-Mind, perceiving His Works, has sown into all of them the bond of Love, which with its Fire conquers all, and compels all creatures to continue loving on—for endless Time ! ”

Then the singers intoned the noble Mehan-gyō, the Sutra of Nirvana. This interprets the triumph attained by crossing the seas of Birth

and Death, and has been exquisitely interpreted as follows :—

“ Transient are all ! They, being born, must die ; and, being dead, are glad to be at rest.” ¹

The conventional term of mourning was fifty days. For seven ensuing months Zuri sheltered the widow, but her life was a flickering flame that never revived completely from the latest shock, and by the end of that time faded gradually away. Then the soul of the devoted wife rejoined that of her husband in the Meido world.

Zuri preserved to the last the confidence reposed in her, and the poor mother was kept from the knowledge of the treachery of her son to his faith.

Through the faithful friend of Zuri, the Princess Ariso, something of her romantic history and everything to her honour, had been confided to the Crown Princess, with the result that Zuri was often sent for to the Palace, and was not allowed to suffer the full burden of physical loneliness that came upon her with additional

¹ Lafcadio Hearn, *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan*.

bitterness after the death of her charge. She still clung to her little homestead at Kamakura, for, though some alleviation to her solitude was welcome, this girl lived too intelligently in the midst of her ideals ever to feel mentally alone.

There is one kind of solitude of the body and another of the spirit, but it is the latter to which such an one as Zuri could never be a prey, that drives souls to seek relief in death.

There was also an additional reason. The desire to scatter a few sunbeams in the path of others, even if she was to bask in none herself, made this girl feel that life was still worth while.



AN IMPERIAL WELCOME.

CHAPTER XXIX

EMERGING—CONQUEROR ON THE HEIGHTS

SPRING had dressed Japan once more in bridal array, and the Imperial Court was watching until its beauty culminated in the flowering of the double cherry. Each year it waited for this eight-fold bloom before issuing invitations for a special reception in the beautiful Palace Gardens of Hama Rikiku. When the day arrived, the weather was radiant, enhancing the superb setting that Nature contributed to the scene.

The boughs of the cherry trees drooped gracefully under a prolific display of blossom, and their glory was to the European mind accentuated through not being entirely bereft of foliage, like the earlier display of single-petalled bloom. Small, polished leaves of golden bronze varied the monotony of snowy, clustered branches, and

down by the side of the limpid lakes they bowed and swayed their arms as if drawn to the surface from love of their own reflections in the mirror of water below.

In the distance, arched, rounded bridges led to mysterious and seductive paths, and the strains of a distant band softly wafted the solemn tones of the National March to herald the Royal approach.

Excelsior was gratified to find that the adoption of European dress was commanded at court. She knew no better foil could be presented to her dazzling complexion and faultless figure, than a Japanese lady in Western clothes.

There was a gorgeous display of costumes, including decorative uniforms worn by the representatives of nearly every nation, but Excelsior soon singled out of their midst one figure who alone could not be regarded in the light of a foil, even in comparison to her own more conventionalised beauty.

To do American girls justice, they are less

subject to envy in a spiteful sense than any other specimen of the civilised gender feminine. Excelsior generously acknowledged, even to herself the superiority of the charm of this woman, and she also noted the friendly intercourse graciously accorded to this guest by the Imperial Family. At present she was detained by the side of the Crown Princess, who was engaging her in conversation.

It was Zuri, who, compelled to follow the prevailing rule, had draped her tall and slender figure in a princesse robe of ivory white, and her headgear consisted of a hat of the simplest description that could be chosen in accordance with European style. So delicately tinted was she, she looked more like her name-flower than ever. Round her neck hung an hereditary pearl necklace in one long rope, and beneath the brim of her hat a single lily bloom rested against her black hair.

“ Say, who is that exquisite creature ? ” The question broke from the lips of our American bride almost involuntarily. It was addressed to

her husband, but he appeared to be too much absorbed in conversation with a General by his side to have heard the inquiry, and so it chanced that it was answered from an unexpected quarter.

Pauline Erskine, ever since a formal introduction had been given her to the bride of Ito San, had felt great curiosity concerning her character. Time had not enabled the scrupulous English girl to obliterate all feeling of self-reproach concerning the estrangement which had involved the ruptured engagement of two devoted hearts, but time had done much for Pauline in other respects. Her frequent intercourse with Zuri had widened her mental borders so much that she had even ventured to dispense with some of the dogmatic "fences" she had hitherto found insurmountable. She began to realise that breadth of view did not necessarily entail laxity of duty, or of personal faith. A longer experience of intercourse with Zuri and of the selfless life she lived had led her into those broad pastures of thought where all ways make for peace.

Pauline came forward in response to the unheeded question of Excelsior, and answered it.

"The name of that lady is O Zuri San. I know her intimately, and can assure you she is even more beautiful in mind than she is in person."

"Did you say her name is Zuri?" replied the American. "Sure, then, she is rightly named after the lily."

The next instant, rather irrelevantly, it seemed to her, an incident from the past flashed across the memory of the bride—the occasion on which Ito had interpreted to her the name of the flower. She remembered how she had insisted on selecting it to trample upon when her triumphal wedding march had been performed. It was a Philistine thing to do, she now admitted honestly to herself, and then wondered why the act should vaguely trouble her at the present moment.

Pauline smiled. "I see you are making advances with the Japanese language," she said. "Is it not a beautiful custom of theirs to name their women after flowers? I may say I know a perfect bouquet of those who are present to-day,

and I regret to hear that the custom of having recourse to such names in public is going out of vogue in high circles. That lady who passed is a Matsu, or pine. I also see Ume, a plum, and O-Ine, which means the 'ear of young rice.' "

"None of them can compare with Zuri," said the American critically; "she would make even one of our own belles sit up!"

"I have no doubt of it," responded Pauline warmly. "I have heard her called 'Yanagigoshi,' which means the 'willow-waist,' and the Empress is reported to have said she cannot be recognised by any other name so well as by her own, because her charm when moving, is the charm of a Hineyari."

"Now you are giving my Japanese too much credit, Miss Erskine. What does Hineyari mean?"

"It is a specially graceful species of lily, known in botany as the *Lilium callosum*. But O Zuri San has reminded me of almost every variety of the flower in turn. In regard to her self-effacement, I think of the modest lily of our vales at

home, hiding its bells in the folds of its leaves ; but on occasions that call for the assumption of dignity she resembles the statelier specimen of the flower, and always, she exhales their purity."

Excelsior, who had been sweeping the assembly with her lorgnette till it remained stationary on Zuri, lowered it now, and observed deliberately—

" Well, Miss Erskine, all I can say is she has gotten herself into an unnatural state of perfection that isn't human ! Such women ordinarily repel me ; but there's a magnetism in the face of that girl that draws me after her right away, though inwardly I'm pulling against it for all I'm worth ; what does it mean ? "

" I believe it means," replied Pauline sincerely, " that she has reached a spiritual level we shall all attain some day, though at present it allures us against our will, at least, I know I stop very far short of it. There is nothing assertive about the goodness of O Zuri San—it is just a glow that shines through her from the steady light within."

" Have you tackled that girl with your convert-

ing apparatus?" inquired Excelsior, her shrewd eyes twinkling slyly.

"Indeed I did! But Heaven forbade me success," exclaimed Pauline honestly. "Though Zuri San is a Shintōist, she is far more of a Christian than I am myself."

The American was silent for a moment and then asked abruptly—

"Say, Miss Erskine, do you hugely enjoy worrying round trying to eradicate the Japanese religion? For that is what you missionaries are after out here, if I understand the symptoms."

"I must confess I used to enjoy it," owned Pauline, with some appreciation of the humour which had suggested the question.

"Well, I guess it gratifies you somewhat, else you never could take such unnecessary trouble. My husband, Miss Erskine, gives you the credit of having induced him to recut his mouldy old creed to a more up-to-date pattern. Now, what I want to know is this, do you ever succeed in grubbing up the entire roots? Old ones strike deep, as you know, and take a deal of

pulling ! Do you ever find them springing up again unexpectedly—high enough to choke your further efforts ? ”

“ You are right,” replied Pauline ; “ there is never a severed root that does not leave a score of living fibres behind it. I have proved that many a time. I used to be proud of what I considered were my successful efforts, now, I am ashamed of them.”

“ Oh come ! You’ve no call to be that, I reckon. A man can do no more than his level best to succeed, but as for religion, well, I may give you a shock, but I just don’t believe it matters a rotten pumpkin which one anybody professes.” She glanced down saucily as she spoke, courting a rebuke.

To her surprise none came, and Pauline only said quietly, “ It is character, not creed, that matters.”

Then the English girl lapsed into silence, thinking—with the remorseful pang of an orthodox conscience that was shedding its prejudices very reluctantly,—what a different answer she would

have given this American if she had asked her the same question not three years ago !

Excelsior dropped her lorgnette. " You are nothing if not honest, Miss Erskine," she exclaimed ; and then she added heartily, " I like your grit ; shake hands ! "

CHAPTER XXX

THE DAIMYŌ'S DAUGHTER GIVES ALL

THE special presentations that were to be made to the Emperor now commenced, and Ito came back to lead forward his bride in her turn.

The American approached, looking, so Pauline thought, as supremely satisfied with her appearance as if her clothes had grown upon her by her own express command. When she drew near the Emperor, her very obeisance seemed to convey a challenge to His Imperial Majesty to produce her equal.

Thus Zuri, standing by the Crown Princess, was brought face to face with the woman by whom she was now supplanted. She raised her eyes and regarded her with a look of interest, and her inward comment was: "She is very beautiful in the Western sense, but how will Ito bear with

the dominant will, of which there are such evident indications in manner and accent ? ”

The presentation over, she was roused from these thoughts by hearing the bride of Ito remark to him in a stage whisper—

“ I want to know that lady—she is the most beautiful Japanese woman present ; introduce her ! ”

Ito, bowing so low that the expression of his face escaped her notice, was compelled to comply with the request of his wife.

When he had done so with the necessary exaggerations of national etiquette, to which Zuri duly responded, he took the first opportunity of withdrawing from the conversation that ensued.

Zuri charmed Excelsior still more by the friendliness of her smile as she observed pleasantly—

“ I trust, honourable lady, that you are content with the impression our humble country has made upon you.”

“ That entirely depends upon the impression

I have made upon your country," Excelsior replied, with her characteristic smartness. "You see, O Zuri San, we Americans are more accustomed to make impressions than to receive them. May I inquire if Japan can claim the honour of including you as a pure-bred Japanese? For if so, your country has gotten hold of my good impressions already."

Zuri drew back with a gesture of hauteur so delicately expressed that Excelsior said afterwards she would have given her best frock to catch the trick of it.

"It is not our custom to proclaim our parentage, honourable lady, but if it gives you interest to learn so poor a detail, know I am but the insignificant descendant of the Daimyōs of Matsue."

Excelsior had heard her husband allude to the Daimyōs of Matsue, whose castle was now in ruin, but whose pedigree was lost in a background of feudal celebrity.

The words had been modest enough, but the tone of the reply, as the American afterwards expressed it, made her feel "like the flea who

dared to alight on the nose of the Duke of Wellington," therefore she tried to, "hop off the sacred crimson bridge immediately" by saying—

"All I know, lovely lady, is, that from whatever mould the gods turned you out, they smashed it afterwards, for I have never seen any one quite like you."

The compliment was administered with such sincerity that Zuri was disarmed, and was on the point of making a reply in the same spirit, when an incident transpired that threatened to alter the whole future course of Japanese history.

Having concluded her conversation with Zuri the Crown Princess had moved away to address others, but the Prince remained occupying the same position.

He had conversed with several guests while the presentations had been made to the Emperor, and was standing a little in advance of Zuri, with one shoulder turned aside.

Presently there was an abrupt stir in the august assembly, and a man wearing the livery of a court official stepped hastily forward.

Concluding him to be a messenger of importance, the group still awaiting presentation made way for him, and he approached behind the Prince.

There was a cry, an exclamation of horror from Excelsior, who was in a position to witness each movement, and then, before any one save those in immediate vicinity could realise what had happened, Zuri was seen lying prostrate in the supporting arms of the Prince.

Excelsior sprang forward impulsively, and in an instant her strong white hands were grasping the intruder by the neck, clutching his throat with a grip like steel, and effectually hindering his further advance.

Then a terrible sight was presented to the terror-stricken spectators.

The long white robe of Zuri was saturated with blood, and in her side a dagger had been thrust, which the Crown Prince, with more promptness than discretion, was endeavouring to disengage.

Urged by the severity of the shock into an

expression of his genuine feelings, Ito rushed to the spot, and fell on his knees by Zuri's side. He caught the word "Safe!" which the girl faintly murmured as she raised triumphant eyes towards her Prince.

Then they reverted to meet those of Ito, and with a smile that was quenched in a moan of agony, she lapsed into unconsciousness.

"Zuri!"

Loud and piercing rose this cry that voiced her name.

It burst forth unrestrained from the lips of Ito, or rather from the very core of his inmost being, as he pronounced it in the ear of the fainting girl.

There was so much profound entreaty expressed in his enunciation of the name, that Excelsior started, as if a declaration had been made for which she was utterly unprepared.

It caused her to relax her grasp on the throat of the assassin and she relinquished him, half-strangled by his efforts to escape, to the guard who arrived to arrest him. Turning, the Ameri-

can stood stone-still, gazing at her husband, as if paralysed with the magnitude of the revelation his heartrending exclamation had presented to her.

In this agonising appeal to Zuri by name, Ito had involuntarily reverted to an ancient custom in Japan, which maintains that to call loudly in the ear of a dying person will compel the soul to return before the curtain of the shadows closes around it.

In common with the unguarded impulse of many a materialist before him, Ito, by so doing, returned for a moment to an expression of what was virtually a corroboration of the belief he had abjured.

The Imperial party and guests who overheard him simply attributed his conduct to this prevailing custom, but Excelsior, wholly ignorant of such a construction, failed to account for the intensity of feeling it exposed, save by one astounding hypothesis—that of Love.

The episode had been enacted with such rapidity that the assailant, who proved eventually

to be a Russian anarchist, was dragged away before the deed became known outside the exclusive circle which witnessed it.

Then arose murmurs of "Anarchist ! Murder !" and before long every guest present was made aware of the tragic details.

They knew that O Zuri, through instantaneously divining the intention of the murderer, had deliberately interposed herself between the dagger and the Crown Prince, receiving the thrust in her own body in his stead, and by so doing had preserved the life of the beloved heir to the Imperial throne.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE SOUL OF ITO AWAKES

THE cry with which Ito strove to arrest the departing soul of Zuri, served to reveal to him his own.

It sprang from his hidden higher ego, and rent, as it were, a veil from the false sophistry that condoned his conduct in the past. He realised himself now as renegade, not merely to his national faith, which counted little to him still, but to all that would have ensured his happiness.

Now that Zuri was hastening, as he feared, to that extinction in which he told himself he believed—what were ambition, success, fame to him! Nothing.

Suddenly a stern resolve gathered strength from the surging conflict of emotion within him.

It was born, no doubt, from that principle of hereditary honour which had ever striven to purge itself by drastic means. Degraded and debased now, even in his own estimation, there remained yet one way to cleanse himself in the eyes of Zuri and those she esteemed, and this was by means of the time-honoured method of *Hara-Kiri*.

This expiation, if carried quickly into effect, might be known to Zuri while she still lived, beyond that he neither thought nor cared.

Leaving a message for his wife, to the purport that urgent affairs necessitated his absence for several days, Ito made as swift a journey as the great distance from Tokyō would permit, and came, after several days of travel, in sight of the temple-crowned heights of Haruna.

He had never faced Hannushi San since his apostasy, but that fact did not deter him. The days of his boyhood were long since past when he had venerated his priestly instructor, knowing him to be free from the fanaticism of his class.

With wonderful swiftness Ito ascended those

wearying rock ladders hewn from the face of the cliffs, and gained at last the scrupulously appointed shrines.

There his patience was sorely tried by being compelled to wait before the High Priest was at liberty to grant him an interview. When Hannushi San emerged finally and greeted him, he was in the act of removing a bandage from across his lips, where it had been firmly bound, a sign that he had been engaged in presenting food-offerings which it is not permitted that the human breath should sully.

With scant regard to custom, Ito cut short the preliminary courtesies. He informed the High Priest that he came to demand him to hand over into his own possession the hereditary Sword of the Hatomoto Samurai, to which he had a rightful claim, and which he felt sure his father had confided to his care. Although affecting to scorn the family tradition that ascribed to the sword supernatural powers, and asserted that in cases of emergency on the battlefield it had been seen to swing itself, Ito could not fail to

value a weapon with which Kanin San had felled at a stroke five common blades, without dulling its edge.¹

A glance at the young man fully accounted for the request to Hannushi San.

He saw his words had been verified, and that awakened remorse had commenced to prove "its own sufficient hell."

Grieved as he had been in the case of Ito at the total shipwreck of his tuition, he augured signs of promise from his eager impulse towards expiation now.

He spoke in the usual familiar tense.

"Follow me," he said. "I will show thee the sword in the same condition in which thy honourable father consigned it here."

Thus speaking, he led Ito in silence to the Votive Shrine, where, as we know, Kanin San had dedicated it, and stood aside, quietly watching the young man's face when he discovered that the blade had been split asunder, and presented as an expiatory offering before the Illustrious Ancestors.

¹ Fact.

It was evident Ito was shaken to the soul. It needed no words of explanation to convince him that by this act his father had intended deliberately to deprive him of the legitimate means of *Hara-Kiri*, in order to show him that he admitted of no way of atonement by this measure for him !

Rounding on the High Priest, Ito exclaimed sternly—

“ Will you swear that my father broke this sword with his own hands, without any connivance and assistance from you ? ”

“ No, my son, I will not swear it, because my word is a sufficient bond, but I will say I knew not of the intended deed until it was accomplished. I believe that your honourable father died of a broken heart, occasioned by the supreme effort entailed by the act.” Then slowly and with dignity he added these words : “ There is no return to the path of honour for thee by this means, Ito San ! ”

It was then that bitter disappointment culminated in deep anger, and Ito exclaimed—

“ Who art thou who wouldst forbid me to tread the national path of honour ? ”

Calmly the High Priest responded—

“ Who, indeed, am I, my son ! I did not say there was no other way of return to honour for thee. I said, it could not be by this well-trodden path. The gods be thanked, it is not in the power of the most rebellious soul to close all avenues of return ! ”

Then the materialism that his reason had so long fostered broke forth through all restraint, and Ito cried—

“ The gods ! I know the gods are nought, and never were ! I know they are but bogies of your priestly brains, conjured to ensure the subjugation of fools ! Hear me when I declare that I defy the whole pantheon of gods, be they Shintō, Indian, or Christian ; but if I seek by means of *Hara-Kiri* the vindication of my honourable name in the eyes of my Emperor and kindred, I tell thee, there lives no priest or devil who shall bar me from the road.”

The High Priest continued in the same calm tone—

“ My son, the only way of vindication open to thee now is by *living*, not by dying !

“ If it were possible for thee to extinguish in death thy miserable existence, as thou falsely believest, I should counsel thee to die, since thou hast made this life a raging and intolerable hell.” Then, raising his voice with increased solemnity, he added, “ By the Hidden Name of that All-Pervading Life through whom the gods exist, I charge thee, remain on earth ! Here, it is given to some souls to exhaust their hell, by living through it, and thus it is offered to thee.

“ By dying thou canst but accentuate and prolong thy hell. Live ! erring son, if ever thou darest to hope that thou wilt find thy lost Eurydice again ! ”

Silenced, but still fighting with all his strength against the spiritual influence which, without assumption, emanated from Hannushi San, Ito turned abruptly away, and, without waiting for the conventional leave-taking, began rapidly

descending the mountain, until he disappeared from sight.

The High Priest gazed long after the retreating figure with sorrow-brimming eyes, then slowly, like one scarce conscious of his steps, he made his way back to the threshold of his dwelling.

That night, and again, repeatedly, for three nights in succession, the junior priests of Haruna, when discharged from attendance at the shrines, laid their fingers on their lips and exchanged warning glances.

Later on, without further explanation, they hurried down the cliff, in the direction of their village, and dispersed to their homes down the long avenue of cryptomeria trees.

They knew their beloved High Priest desired solitude those three consecutive nights, when he ascended the steps that led to the sacred Honden.

There, kneeling upon the highly polished crimson lacquer, he might have been seen, on each occasion, his tall form silhouetted against the amethyst blue of the darkening evening sky.

A noble figure with raised, not bowed head,

and fingers lifted upwards, pressing point to point, while his soul, penetrating to profound depths inwardly, became absorbed in that unexplored expansion of being that passes far, far beyond the ordinary bourne of prayer !

CHAPTER XXXII

WHICH WILL TRIUMPH ?

MANY hundred miles removed from the fastnesses of Haruna-zan, bounded by the richly verdant plains of central Japan, rises the majestic mountain of Asama-Yama !

It may be fitly described as the magnificent antithesis of the sacred Fuji-san. The two mountains typify the eternal law of opposites by means of which Nature adjusts her balance in the distribution of physical phenomena.

Mount Fuji stands serene, the witness of a conqueror, for its volcanic fires are quenched, and its ivory crest is purified.

Asama-Yama, on the contrary, pants still in the grip of passionate throes, jetting forth maddened flames, while fumes like some foul incense rise from its summit, disfiguring the heavens with a



FUJI AT REST.

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dark writhing coil as if a monstrous serpent was endeavouring to accomplish its ascension.

One mountain is as essential as the other in ensuring the operation of the will of the Supreme !

May we not say the same of forces good and evil ? Is not man in truth the microcosm of the macrocosm, and must not every soul rage its way through the furnace of an Asama, if it ever hopes to attain the calm white purity that clothes the Risen Man ?

If the reader has ever ridden on horseback, as the writer has ridden, in the teeth of a blinding storm across the stretches of valley that lead eventually to the slopes of Asama, he will verify what is described, only he must have thus ridden when darkness has folded its mantle round the scene.

The cheer and glory of a flower-strewn earth ends with the last tree, and under this the rider must dismount and leave his horse. Then, confronting him, lies the barren back of the mountain, looking at this distance as if cased in

cast iron, up which he must presume to crawl like an ant on the surface of a bomb.

Approaching nearer, the iron resolves itself into rough lava teeth, which either pierce or slide beneath his struggling feet, and this monotonous and painful ascent continues for hours before the climber can attain to the crater, that pit of rampant fire which is his goal !

It was just such a tempestuous night when the figure of Ito might have been perceived making the arduous ascent alone.

He had walked and not ridden to the base of the mountain, without realising any sense of fatigue, and when he reached the point where the last pale flowers that had hitherto starred the volcanic soil—give up blooming in despair—he was drenched to the skin.

Here the bare ascent begins and Ito might, had his mood permitted, have borne witness to a grand atmospheric diorama.

The fierce deluge of rain had given place to mist, enveloping every chasm as if with wisps of gauze. Above, however, was being enacted

ASAMA-YAMA.





APPROACHING THE SUMMIT!

what was to him a more congenial scene—war to extinction was raging for undisturbed supremacy between the storm and moon. At first the result was doubtful, for again and again that luminary was outflanked by the massed clouds of the tempest, and completely over-ridden. Later on, her persistent stream of silver artillery gathered strength and finally succeeded in driving down the clouds till they fell, pell-mell, over the precipices and lay broken and disordered in the dim valleys below. There the storm retreated to rage out its own despair, while the moon in smiling security triumphed gloriously, and hung, like the bow of Dian, glowing with victory, by the side of Asama's crest, in a swept and cloudless sky.

Ito climbed on, scarcely realising the fact that the jagged cinder-teeth had torn his zōri, till he impatiently flung off their lingering shreds and pressed on, in unprotected tabi (socks) that were soon stained by his bleeding feet.

The physical pain was rather welcome to him than otherwise, so were the difficulties in sur-

mounting blocks of lava, that seemed to him to represent, in petrified black tears, his disappointed aims. Ever above him glowered the crimson breath that illumined the lip of the crater, and at times a roar, as from imprisoned lions in the entrails of the mountain, caused its surface to vibrate and shudder underneath his tread.

Splendid hereditary courage precluded the thought of fear in the young Samurai, and awe was excluded from his mind owing to its tempestuous condition. Every sinew and nerve were strained towards the accomplishment of his ascent before morning dawned, in order that he might eclipse his life under cover of congenial darkness, and extinguish for ever, as he believed, the agony of remorse. He yearned for the deadly calm of extinction which his materialism promised him. This form of *Hara-Kiri* at least lay in his power, and neither God, priest, nor devil should rob him of his prerogative to exercise it.

When he had climbed within a stone's-throw of the brink of the crater, he paused, and stood



THE BRINK OF THE CRATER.

watching the elemental forces that were apparently favouring his design.

A contrary wind had risen, abruptly changing the course of the sulphurous discharge, this, being vomited spasmodically from the monstrous throat, might otherwise have smothered him.

One strong, swift blast dispersed its fumes and, sporting with them, drove them to the farther side of the crater, leaving half the jagged cup exposed and clear for his approach.

Taking a fearless stand upon the brink Ito gazed steadily within. He was calmer, now that his mad wilfulness had gained its point. Quieter thoughts supervened, and as he looked down he came to the conclusion that his ancestors must have formed their first conception of the national dragon from the sight that met his gaze. Surely its archetype lay there, some six or seven feet below the brink, scintillating jets of fire and evincing a superb beauty all its own.

Truly the boiling lava had lashed itself into a noble dragon form. There it lay—a writhing iridescent beast, the gigantic body exquisitely

inlaid with countless prismatic hues. It even seemed projecting polished claws to facilitate its upward throes, and yet in spite of herculean efforts, it could not succeed in upheaving itself level with the lip of the crater, but lay panting and sobbing forth fierce blasts of baffled breath. Occasionally resentment in its failure to escape, took the form of howls like submerged thunder.

Ito continued to watch it, with the fascinated gaze a bird is reported to experience when within reach of the fatal spring threatened by a snake, only this time the fatal spring must be one of his own making. He did not repent his purpose, every vibration of the fiery dragon served as an additional magnet to lure him down.

Slowly he began divesting himself of his kimono, for an unimpeded plunge, and he did this as coolly as he had so often done it in the School of Jūjutsu in which he had excelled.

When quite prepared, an irresistible impulse restrained him for a moment, and caused him to glance back over his shoulder, expectant of—he knew not what.

Behind him, standing so near that he must needs impede his spring—he saw the High Priest of Haruna.

Hannushi San stood there, as calm and unruffled as he had been when he left him with scant courtesy on the heights of the temple.

His eyes were fixed upon Ito. There was no reproof in them, but they were full of imperturbable compassion. He towered above him, a dignified figure indeed, clad in his robes of office, his arms folded across his breast as he slowly enounced these words—

“Thyself cannot flee from thyself, my son ! Even in the depths of the furnace that which is indestructible within thee must suffer on, and *dare* not die ! Death is not the Way of Honour for thee, Ito San. Live ! It is life that calls thee !”

The embers of Ito’s slumbering rage kindled to renewed fury as he listened.

“I know not by what conjuring trick thou hast contrived to transport thyself here, and so found me,” he cried. “Am I not free from thy self-imposed interference now ? Is not my will

my own? How darest thou thwart me? Stand back for me to effect my purpose, lest I do thee mortal injury! I tell thee, not all the priests of the united religions of God or devils shall obstruct my will!"

He glared at Hannushi San as he spoke, and his rage increased to madness when he perceived that although the High Priest extended no restraining hand, he did not recede one inch from his position, his face still expressing the same indomitable compassion.

The sight drove Ito to extremity.

Doubling his fist, he struck the majestic figure full in the face—a terrific blow, that fell between the eyes.

If he had been less blinded with passion he would have noticed that Hannushi San sustained the blow without flinching; but directly he had struck it, Ito moved away to effect his purpose, and if he had looked again he would have seen that the priest was no longer there. He did not look, but, stepping back, was once more on the point of leaping into the gulf when a voice, more

effectual than that of the priest, or indeed of any angel out of heaven, arrested him, paralysing his spring, and causing him to tremble from head to foot with abject genuine fear !

“ Ito ! Live ! ” it cried, and yet again, in agony of pleading, “ Ito ! Live ! ”

It did not appeal in vain. At last the spirit-senses of Ito were awakened. The “ transmitter ” had found the “ receiver ” and telepathic communication was fully established between two souls by the matchless magician Love.

All the ungovernable rage and every passionate resistance subsided to absolute impotence under the influence of that cry.

“ Zuri ! Zuri, beloved ! if you stay, I stay,” he responded, and, falling prostrate on the ground, he sobbed forth the saving tears of a vanquished and broken-hearted child !

Then, as if sympathetic Nature would fain emphasise this compelling power of love, from out the East, above the fiery flare of the awful pit, there rose a gentle glow that seemed a smile from God !

Across a sea of still, soft cloud, that lay like down below the mountain peak, it stole, till, bursting forth in pristine purity, it reigned a risen sun! Outspreading wings of glory the glow embraced the mountain and enfolded the poor human will that lay there wrecked, until at length it stilled the subterranean fury and whispered to the humbled soul of Ito, "Peace, be still!"

* * * * *

When the junior priests of Haruna, hundreds of miles away, ventured in the flush of that same sunrise to seek their chief, who had spent three consecutive nights before the shrine, they found him in the attitude we have before described—absorbed in concentration and soul-quietude.

There was the same serene expression on his features, but his face was marred by a deep dark bruise which disfigured the forehead between his eyes.

The young priests started back dismayed and

horrified, but Hannushi San opened his eyes, and rising, with kindly greetings, joined them, and though he vouchsafed no single word of explanation, he accompanied them and descended from the shrine.

“ Impossible ! ” exclaims a reader. Hannushi San was said to have been on Asama-Yama at that time, hundreds of miles away ; it was there he received the revengeful blow !

That certainly is true, yet it is also a fact that he had *never moved* physically, on that eventful night, from his interceding posture before the sacred Honden of Haruna !

There are a few thoughtful souls who will understand it, and still fewer, more than thoughtful, who have studied the laws of psychological repercussion, and who will not use the word impossible ! For the rest, “ He who is able to receive it, let him receive it.”

CHAPTER XXXIII

PAULINE SURRENDERS

“ NOT mortal ! ”

This was the medical verdict in regard to the severe and dangerous wound Zuri had sustained.

She had been conveyed into the palace, and attended there as assiduously by Imperial command as if she had been of blood royal, and not merely of loyal blood.

For many days it was not certain whether life or death would claim her ; when finally pronounced to be out of immediate danger, she was, by her own earnest request to the Crown Princess, removed to her little homestead at Kamakura.

The heroic deed had aroused such unanimous enthusiasm that the special decoration instituted for women by the Empress Hara Ko was super-

seded by an unprecedented action of the Government.

It did her the supreme honour of laying before the Emperor its desire to award Zuri San the Order of the Rising Sun and of Merit, and this in its unique class, which is called "Paulownia."

The medal consisted of a rising sun, with outspreading rays, surmounted by a spray of the leaves and flowers of the genus *Paulownia Imperialis*. It was suspended from a white ribbon with a wide red border on either side.

The Paulownia tree is native to Japan, and has large leaves shaped like a heart.

The capsules of its flowers, which incline to purple in colour, contain winged seeds, and these when examined by a microscope reveal the most exquisite designs.

No doubt the birth of Zuri removed an obstacle to the bestowal of this favour, which would have proved insurmountable in the case of any woman lowly born.

A pension to enable her to live her life in affluence was added, and privately the members of

the Imperial Family vied with one another to compass her with honour.

Sweet as it all was naturally, the chief reward to Zuri lay in the fact of her success, hereditary devotion causing her to regard her act as the highest privilege life could bestow. It was in itself sufficient compensation without thought of other recompense.

And now she was thankful to escape for a time from overwhelming demonstrations of gratitude, and rest in the seclusion of her modest home.

There was one friend who would not leave her long in solitude, and Zuri smiled when she thought how impervious Pauline Erskine had been to any gentle hints administered by attendants to keep away.

Every day the English lady found an excuse to call, either to see whether medical orders were being perseveringly carried out, or to ascertain if Zuri was not too soon endeavouring to exert herself.

There was little fear on this account, as the

girl did not recover her strength sufficiently, and when time passed, and this condition continued, Pauline became inwardly convinced that the Japanese medical treatment, however distinguished and "honourable," was not judicious.

The fear worried her so persistently that she suddenly reverted to unbounded faith in Lionel Trevor, her *ci-devant* fiancé, now enrolled in the list of the Royal College of Surgeons. Pauline actually contemplated summoning him from London to the rescue, and if science had only achieved a reliable balloon service, she would at all costs have promptly availed herself of it to secure his prompt attendance.

She sat beside Zuri one languid summer day, when she was reclining on the verandah, where her "futon" had been spread, in order that she might inhale the life-giving breeze that sighed across the gentian-blue expanse of the lazy sea.

"This won't do at all!" pronounced Pauline stoutly. "You are not making headway in regaining strength. I shall speak seriously to

your medico concerning his treatment if I can only get at him."

"I cannot permit you to affront the personal adviser of the Emperor, kind friend," said Zuri, with a smile; and then ensued a pause, during which she gazed into Pauline's face very wistfully.

After a time she said with hesitancy, "These years have made us friends in soul, have not they?"

"Rather!" corroborated Pauline, with her heart in the word she uttered.

"That being so," went on Zuri, "I feel I must confide in you a truth, it being kinder in the end to do so. Understand then, dear friend, I have been made wiser than the honourable doctor! I *know* that even if you brought over the sea, the college of all your clever London surgeons, not one of them could keep me here."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Pauline in horror. "Why, we all know it is only a question of recruiting strength; you are already pronounced quite out of danger."

"My friend, though I cannot explain whence

my certainty comes, it springs from no human source, and I know you may believe what I tell you ! I shall never rise from my couch in the sense you desire me to do. I shall soar away in quite another fashion of going ! Why do you look so startled ? Ah ! you are not to grieve ! ” for Pauline bent her head to wrestle with a sob that was choking her.

“ Did not one of your English writers say, he looked forward to death with a reverent curiosity ? Well, that is how I feel about it. Just think you, one moment. I, who have never travelled, shall explore ‘ in pastures new,’ and not lonely pastures, but peopled with those I love, where all my illustrious ones will be sure to welcome me.”

Pauline controlled herself and said emphatically—

“ I cannot bear to hear you talk of death, you, who are still so young and beautiful, with all your life before you ! ”

“ And shall I not have life before me still ? ” replied Zuri. “ This is what I cannot under-

stand about you Christians, why you are all so afraid of death when your Jesus broke the tomb and turned its terror into paradise."

And Pauline sat silenced and ashamed.

"You see," pursued Zuri, "the first stage of it is only a different side of the same world. Every time we fall to sleep we raise the curtain and go. I know that is so, because since I have been ill, I can bring back the memory of what I say and do, and I see there is, even there, a very big—what you would call 'missionary field.'"

"But, Zuri, you will be an angel," and Zuri stopped her with a smile.

"I shall be no such thing. You must think of me, my honourable friend, as the same Zuri, only with a lighter body to move about, instead of this heavy one of flesh. Death cannot change the character, because character is part of the spirit-ego that endures."

Then the two sat silent, while Zuri rested for a while, and some of the calming assurance that exhaled from her being, stole into Pauline's troubled heart and comforted her.

"I am so happy in these talks with you," Zuri said, when inclined to speak again; "so happy because we discuss now, we never argue any more, and we are not angry one with the other in that which we disagree."

"It is I who was hard and bitter; you were never angry," said Pauline; "you were always the essence of patient courtesy. But oh, we know so little by actual proof."

"Physical proof you mean; that word makes all the difference to those who *in*-ly see. Often I think it was our *igwa* to meet, that we might exchange the little we think we have learned."

"If you are not too tired, will you tell me more precisely what you understand by *igwa*, Zuri?"

"It is an idea, remember, not a dogma, and is not in our original Shintō belief. We have no dogmas."

"Then I suppose you regard it as a reasonable hypothesis only, and, if so, I am with you," said Pauline.

"If I understand *hy-po-the-sis* aright," said

Zuri cautiously, "I think it is more to us than that. The idea came to us like a flash of truth from Buddhism. In India they call *igwa*, karma. It is the harvest sown by our past deeds, harmful or otherwise. The consequences are assimilated and stored by a sleeping-partner of our memory we call conscience, and this accounts for its sensitive shrinking from evil."

"Why do you call conscience a sleeping-partner, Zuri? Mine is always uncomfortably awake!"

"I so say because conscience is a store of memory but half roused. We often know not why it troubles us. It is in some persons quite vague, but it grows distinct as we develop, and some day it will show us all our past existences! Even now it teaches us by our mistakes, or 'sins,' as you would call them, that is just because it is an uneasy, submerged memory, striving to keep us from committing them afresh."

"I wonder why your Shintō teachers did not discover *igwa*," said Pauline.

"Ah! that I cannot tell. It is not given to

every religion to discover the same phases of Truth. That is why we should never persecute one another, but try to exchange our ideas. We have each some treasure to offer, yet not one of us possesses a monopoly of Truth."

"But those many existences," persisted Pauline, "against which my mind so fiercely rebels, do you imagine they will always be spent on this planet?"

"Ah no, my friend; it may differ in many a case, but in my poor opinion the inference is, that we come back to earth like children back to school, till we have learned all it can teach us."

"I cannot overcome the mental fatigue entailed by such a conception," remarked Pauline.

"That may be because you are forgetting the long intervals of rest provided for us between our lives, rest for the spirit to assimilate all it has garnered in each life of wisdom and experience, and enjoy the spiritual happiness earned by successful physical struggle."

"If what you say is true," exclaimed Pauline,

“surely it ought to be our constant effort to persuade the world to accept it.”

“No ; that is your proselytising spirit again, which makes great error. The understanding of such conclusions cannot be forced on souls. They can only come into operation with growth. Our great Shintō exponent, Hirata Motowori, makes to some a contradictory utterance when he says : ‘ To know that there is no “ way ” this is truly to have learned the “ Way of the Gods.” ’ By this he means there is no fixed theological path. It can only be discerned according to the growth of a soul. Those who are ready to find the path will seek it, and those who are not ready will remain afraid to move.”

“ A disheartening prospect,” objected Pauline, in whom intervention with the beliefs of other souls, was dying very hard.

Zuri smiled. “ There is no need of hurry and fret, my friend. All will attain, or be ‘ saved,’ as you prefer to say it. Time is only human limitation. We have many eternities before us, in which to develop and ‘ grow ’ ! ”

“ And endure growing pains all the while, I suppose,” said Pauline, with a blunt attempt at humour, because her heart was aching at the prospect of parting which had been held out to her.

“ Courage,” answered Zuri. “ Growing pains are the best signs, because they mean advancement. Truly the only bad symptom is when they cease to trouble us, lest that should mean stagnation ! ”

CHAPTER XXXIV

ZURI RECEIVES HER MESSAGE AND DELIVERS IT

WHEN Death caresses Nature with the beautifying embraces she bestows on the maples in Japan, crowning each with an aureola of glory, she tenderly whispers, "Where is thy sting?"

"So careful of the type—so careless of the form," she preaches yearly to our souls, "whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear," that disregarded Shintō truth of persistent, immanent *Life*!

Figuratively, a crown like this rested on the head of Zuri, only in her case Love, not Time, had placed it there.

The more fragile her body grew the brighter this crown became, till Pauline, watching her wonderingly, was reminded of the Greek theory concerning the *Augoeides*, or "higher self."

Some mysterious shining presence was in her case, evidently piercing through the daily weakening body, owing to the increasing power of the strengthening soul.

One morning Zuri sent for her English friend, and, intimating a desire that they should not be disturbed, began to speak eagerly when they were alone.

“ I want,” she said impressively, “ to confide in you, while still I have some strength, a very real and curious experience that came to me this early dawn.

“ First, I pray you, do not reason it away as ‘ merely a dream.’ No one who has experienced both dreams and visions can confuse the two. I *know* this for that which is the more reliable—a vision—and as such I entrust it to you.”

She paused, and Pauline waited silently.

Presently she went on in calmer tones—

“ This dying, my friend, is like the ebb and flow of yonder tide, so far, so very far, one may recede, and yet return again. I never thought to linger here so long.”

Her eyes sought for a moment the distant pulsing sea, while through the verandah came the sigh of its subdued waves, gently fretting the resisting sand.

So gracious was the face of Nature this morning that it seemed to Pauline as if she had flung aside her veil, and, to the eyes and ears that could hear and see, was manifesting a divine consciousness, both of the pain that passes, and the joy that supervenes.

Zuri continued: "I had lain sleepless for several hours, so, understand, I was in full possession of my watchful consciousness. Suddenly, a being from the Invisible Realm—such as we call in Japanese a Tennin, and you an Angel—floated to my side and held out her hand. Claspings it without hesitation, so kindly was the silent invitation, I rose, leaving my fleshly prison with relief, thinking the time was come; and so I soared with her, not so much upward, as into, an ever-broadening expanse that I suppose I must call space.

"She led me at last to the borders of a glorious

sphere of Light, and there we found our progress arrested by some imperative force that was irresistible. The Light"—Zuri paused to smile and quote softly, "A Light that never shone on sea or shore"—"increased to such glory I thought I could not bear it, when the Tennin whispered, 'Look and listen—I will strengthen thee.'

"With that I took courage, and perceived that I was gazing into the centre of a translucent aura, that radiated, where brightest, from the outlines of a living Form. I recognised it at once as the Spirit Form of Amida, our own Embodiment of Light, who revealed Himself to us thus in our Shintō faith. He was seated, as He is represented in all our crude attempts at sculpture, His Hands resting on His Lap, with the Thumbs placed end to end. The halo emanating from Him formed what we call a *funa-goko* from its shape being like a boat. There was the Wisdom-spot in the middle of His Forehead, from which streamed a more vivid ray! In the joy that flowed over my soul at being permitted to stand thus, face to

face with the Christ of my Belief, I fell prostrate and inly worshipped Him.

“Presently the Tennin whispered, ‘Fear nothing, and look up.’

“Then, to my joy, I saw the beauteous Figure smiling lovingly upon me, with a smile that penetrated to the core of my being, thrilling me with replenished life.

“And next, a strange thing happened. The Form of the Blessed Amida changed slowly before my sight. Extending His arms, He rose up in cruciform attitude and became the living Personation of Krishna, who, according to ancient Indian Scripture, was bound in the form of a cross to a tree, and shot through with arrows. The outline of the tree was indicated, and I could see the marks the cruel thongs had made upon His Arms; but always, the aura in the midst of which He stood, remained undiminished, and though the features had altered, the smile was the smile of Amida, and was still directed lovingly towards me.”

Once more Zuri paused for an interval of rest.

“ Then,” she continued, “ came a cloud of glistening mist, obscuring the figure of Krishna momentarily, and when it cleared, lo, the Form had resolved Itself into the breathing likeness of the blessed Buddha-Amida, as He is represented by our famous Daibutsu, here in Kamakura, which you saw with me.

“ The face was its living repetition, only the expression of blissful repose was a thousandfold more calm. It was the satisfied expression of One who *knew*—who had found that priceless pearl of Wisdom which contains the keys of all the great enigmas that torment the mind of man ! If I had felt any fear before, it was quite consumed by the reflection of that ineffable Peace.

“ Once more a change ensued. The aura expanded with such an increase of splendour I should assuredly have been blinded by its radiance had not the Tennin touched my eyes and again bade me take courage and behold.

“ When, trembling, I obeyed, I was, to my surprise, not dazzled at all ! Though my eyes dwelt

on a Face that was not familiar to me, I knew it for the Face of the Christians' Jesus Christ !

“ He was not in the agony posture of crucifixion that your churches are so fond of perpetuating, which always made my heart sorry to look upon. Before me was the triumphant Figure of an ascending God. Both His Hands were uplifted in the gesture of blessing, and His smile—oh, how my heart leapt within me for joy when I realised that His smile was *still the smile of Amida!*

“ Then, while I was motionless with excess of rapture at this confirmation of my secret hopes, a Voice, as if——” Here Zuri stopped, in evident loss for a fitting simile, and, after thinking earnestly, added : “ A voice that was for sweetness as if the love of all the mothers in the world was concentrated in its tone. It announced with penetrating clearness : ‘ Behold, I am Amida, and Jesus, the First and the Last ! Go—pass My Message on to the religions of the world, and say with courage that till they—uniting—become but One, in Love, *their Christus cannot reign!* ’

“ With that I seemed to swoon, and when I roused once more, I found myself folded tenderly in the Tennin’s arms, and she was sweeping down and ever downward, as it appeared to me, until I opened my eyes within my body’s bonds—but not for long, Pauline, my friend ; no, not for long.”

The voice of Zuri grew weaker over the concluding words. Then there followed silence, which Pauline dared not break, till Zuri revived, and said with renewed strength—

“ Listen. I must pass my message on to you, for barriers no longer exist, my honourable friend, between your soul and my own. Our religions have melted into one—is it not so ? Answer me ! ”

Pauline, too deeply moved to speak, could only bend her head assentingly.

“ Then all is well,” said Zuri, with a contented sigh. “ I will carry the message of our Christ into the Meido whither I haste, for there are many souls in the prisons of their own making still, and you will give it to your world, dear friend, by living it, not forcing it on men ’ ”

CHAPTER XXXV

FORTH-GIVENESS REPLACES FORGIVENESS

“FORGIVE ! Forgive ! ”

A day later Ito was kneeling at the feet of Zuri, with difficulty articulating the words.

She had granted him a private interview in her verandah, on the floor of which she was still reclining, with the congenial Nature-world that surrounded her, throbbing like a tired heart in the glow of the setting sun.

Beyond the dwelling were the roofs of brown wooden villages, and again, beyond these, the clear-cut edges of distant hills robed and softened in purple bloom.

Nestling between the folds of the tea plantations and golden rice-tracts, ripe for harvest, were temples famous for legendary associations. They seemed weird creatures poised on earth

reluctantly, the graceful sweep of their up-tilted eaves spread forth like wings prepared to soar.

The peaceful scene suggested the thought that Love, pleading with Severity, had prevailed, and was covering the rough places of the earth with her roseate glory.

“ As the bird suspends itself in the air, and the air pulses through the bird,” so floated the soul of the dying girl in the Omnipresence of the All-Father !

She glanced at the prostrate man grasping in despair the border of her kimono, and it seemed to her a marvellous thing that he could exclude himself from the all-pervading peace.

“ Ito ! ” she said gently, extending her hand till it rested on his bowed head, “ there is no need between us of the word ‘ forgive.’ The Divine way of Pardon is not by humiliating a soul, but by setting it at one, in harmony with Christ, whether He be personated by Amida, Krishna, or Jesus. Only so, can thy wounded soul be drawn back to the Father, who views us ‘ as He sent us forth,’ *not* ‘ as we return.’ ”

“ Inasmuch as I may be a channel for pouring such harmony into thy heart, I pray for that privilege in the Meido whither I go.”

“ Zuri, thy love alone has saved me, thy voice arrested me on the brink of the crater, when no other could avail in restraining me from taking my wretched life.”

“ I know it, Ito. Love such as ours was, and is, may be repulsed, crushed down, and smothered, but never destroyed, because it is an immortal principle inherited from our Source. Take courage, and lift up thy head. I have somewhat to say that may comfort thee. When, in my enthusiastic joy in having saved our Prince, I was speeding towards the alluring Light beyond the veil, I heard the cry in which thou voiced my name. I heard it, Ito, *with my soul*, and it drew me back to earth with a force stronger than Death, to assure thee all is well. Now listen to my message, and preserve it in your heart when I am gone.

“ Be good to the wife thou hast chosen. She has both virtuous heart and clever brain.

Never let her suffer through her marriage, but give her constant occasion to rejoice in it. Turn thou new pages in thy book of life over those that are past, and see thou keep them clean, for that will surely ensure our reunion in soul."

"Zuri, my beloved," exclaimed Ito fervently, "I have come prepared to swear to you, by any oath you will, that, at all material costs, I will recant from this new Faith. I will return to Kami-no-Michi, unworthy as I am, if only I may be permitted to creep in the shadow of the Path that thy dear feet have trod!"

The girl raised herself and cried out imperatively—

"No—no! a thousand times no! Ito, be thou not twice renegade! I was ignorant—I knew not many things. In dying I see clearer than before. Serve thou the Jesus of the Christians as thou wouldst now serve Amida, for they are *One*, and make the union, not severance, of religions thy steadfast, lifelong aim!"

Sinking back exhausted, Zuri struck her hands together, and the summons brought her maid.

Ito rose to leave without venturing a response.

Before passing out of her sight, however, he turned, irresistibly impelled to look once more at the exquisite flower face ; and never to the end of his life did he cease to bless God for what he saw.

The lustrous eyes of Zuri were following him, and her face was glowing once more with that trusting smile of love that he had made so sure of never losing in the old boyish days.

It penetrated the gloom of his despair, it lightened his bruised heart, and it was never utterly withdrawn through all the trials the future still held for him, in difficult, weary years.

CHAPTER XXXVI

“THE MAID IS NOT DEAD,” BUT LIVES IN
THE AURA OF AMIDA

THE following day Pauline Erskine was on her way as usual to the home of her friend, when on entering the little garden, she came face to face with the tall figure of the High Priest of Haruna.

Pauline felt sure this man could read her thoughts as easily as he could interpret her speech, but she also felt he would no more abuse this power than an ordinary man of honour would read a letter not addressed to him. She had often heard Zuri allude to her kinsman, and knew how deeply she held him in esteem, but she had only met him two or three times when he had been officiating at festivals, and her personal acquaintance with him was slight.

After formal bows of greeting had been ex-

changed, Pauline was struck by the absence of anxiety in his expression, and drew from it a very erroneous conclusion. She exclaimed, with her usual brusqueness—

“ There is a change for the better ! O Zuri San is once more out of danger. I know it by your face ! ”

“ O Zuri San, beloved by Amida, is truly beyond the reach of danger, honourable lady, for O Zuri San has passed where physical pain has no longer any power to wound.” Then Han-nushi San added solemnly: “ Namu Amida Butsu.”

Suddenly Pauline realised the truth, but the manner in which it was imparted still amazed and disconcerted her. It was so void of any expression of sorrow the High Priest must surely have felt for the loss of one he had known and guided from a child.

He saw her thought, and smiling, said quietly—

“ Neither you, her friend, nor I, her kinsman, have lost O Zuri San. If we yield to tears for

the absence of her bodily presence, we shall but create on that adjoining plane whither she has passed a mist of grief that will obscure her happiness. She is nearer to us now in soul than ever, and hears me as I speak.”

“ But tell me, tell me about it ! ” implored Pauline. “ How was it you came to be present ? Why were you there ? Who brought you to her—in time ? ”

The High Priest bowed assent.

“ I heard the voice of my beloved kinswoman, honoured lady, calling me—that is why I was present. Science calls the method telepathy—a new form of communication—but in reality it is as old as the planet on which we tread. There was, of course, no need of any messenger. I came in time, and was enabled to minister to her according to her wish. In the ordinary way a soul knocks at the door of its special temple as soon as it is free, and when the priest hears it, he hastes to respond to the summons. And now, will the honourable lady pardon my execrable manners when I say I am summoned to report the matter to the

Emperor, and am on my way to the Imperial Palace without delay ? ”

With another low reverence he was gone before Pauline could question him further.

Overcome by the news for which even expectation had not prepared her, Pauline experienced a sudden void in her world that was intolerable, and, creeping within a small pagoda that was at hand, she sank on her knees by the moss-grown seat, and sobbed forth her grief in the established English way, without any heed to those possible consequences on the other plane against which Hannushi San had so wisely warned her !

CHAPTER XXXVII

EXCELSIOR ACCOMPLISHES HER APOTHEOSIS WHILE STILL IN THE FLESH

ROBED in white like a severed lily, the discarded casket of Zuri's pearl-like soul, lay within the little house with a screen called the "biobu," placed between it and the entrance to the room. The kaimyō, or soul-name of Zuri, which the High Priest of Haruna alone had known, was inscribed now upon paper and fastened to the screen. Visitors from all parts of the country came as mourners, bearing in their hands no other flowers than lilies.

It was a national mourning by Imperial decree, and the lilies soon overflowed the limited dimensions of the little house, and were spread broadcast over its surrounding garden. Thus Zuri, like Excelsior, had a bridal-

carpet of these blossoms laid down for her, but one of far wider-reaching effect !

The Crown Princess and Princess Ariso led a stream of illustrious mourners to the spot. They were followed by the chief representatives of Tokyō aristocracy and an interminable line of villagers. Every one in turn was admitted to kneel for a few moments beside the body of the noble girl who had sacrificed her physical life in order to preserve that of the heir to the Imperial throne.

The faithful little maid of Zuri was stationed by the bier to offer a box which was filled with peas—according to a custom which made use of these for counting the number of pious invocations offered. Even those who had not been personally known to Zuri were desirous to do this, in the hope of affording her happy conditions for the journey of her soul.

When this protracted ceremony was concluded, the mourners, who were all clothed from head to foot in white, re-formed in procession and carried the body to its resting-place. They laid it for

a while before the threshold of the temple, where it was greeted by scores of priests in exquisite vestments embroidered in silk and gold, twelve of whom wore symbolic head-gear made of brass descriptive of the signs of the Zodiac.

They presided in accordance with their rank, and were almost eclipsed at intervals by the clouds of incense that ascended above their heads.

Then the deep, mellow tone of the enormous gong, used to clear the atmosphere by its vibration from undesirable "elementals," was silenced and the offerings of food were made to the Illustrious Ancestors of Zuri.

This done, her favourite chant—the one taken from the Hokkeyō, which has been already quoted—was raised to Kwannon, Mother of Pity. It was the same that in the beginning of this history we heard Zuri use in her private devotions before her father's *sotoba*.

When this invocation was finished, some priests, specially chosen from the Imperial temples, recited Sutras, and then, dissecting Zuri's

kaimyō name, they intoned it, giving forth an appropriate vibration to express each separate part.

No one but the High Priest of Haruna was deputed to present the *Saibun*—that is, the address which was finally offered to the soul.

Grandly the speaker stood apart, draped in magnificent robes, an imposing figure, rarely tall, towering above the heads of his contemporaries.

Every word rang from his lips like a clarion note, and could be distinctly heard even by the outermost fringe of the reverent crowd, and yet the audience could not for a moment think he was addressing them, for as a matter of truth he saw not one of them.

Knowing that the sensitive soul of Zuri would shrink now as ever from public adulation, he did not linger, as many anticipated, over phrases of that kind.

He began by greeting O Zuri San, and offering her a tribute of gratitude for the many selfless actions of her life, but above and beyond them all, he blessed her for the crowning act of heroism

that would bind to her the affections of her country not for this generation only, but for all time yet to come. In return for the rescue of that Illustrious Life at the cost of her own, earthly honours had been laid at her feet to the utmost extent Imperial generosity could devise. But it was the deed itself that constituted her best reward.

And now the Gods had deprived them of the privilege of ministering to her on earth, but in the paradise of the Ever-Blessed Amida her happiness was fully assured—if he might so judge with reverence, by the radiancy of glory *in which he saw her stand*.

When the High Priest ceased, no one watching him could doubt that he was fully aware of the actual presence of her whom he addressed.

To Pauline, his face reflected the light of Amida in which he so evidently beheld her! Involuntarily she thought of Moses, but alas! in this instance there was no need of a veil, for the veil lay on men's hearts, and even those who

saw, saw as "through a glass darkly," and were not dazzled.

When Hannushi San stopped speaking, a pause of awe kept every voice in check for a while. Each one seemed unwilling to break it, and not a sound was heard save a low stifled sob, that throbbed and passed from heart to heart of the entire assembly.

It was then suppressed, in obedience to the systematic self-control that is such a national characteristic of the Japanese, but not until it proved the depth of profound assent the speaker had evoked in the souls of all that vast assembly.

When evening cast lengthening shadows over the dispersing mourners, it included the wife of Ito, who had been not the least distinguished one among them. She too had dressed herself in white in deference to the Japanese custom, and had followed reverently the cortège, and now she turned towards her husband and held out both her hands.

There had been silence, guardedly restrained between the two, ever since that agonized cry

from Ito had, at the time of the assassination, penetrated the understanding of Excelsior, and staggered her very soul.

“ Say, Ito,” she now exclaimed, with her hands lying icy cold in his, “ answer me straight! Answer me, from the tribunal of the Highest Truth you know, did you love this woman whom we have seen laid in her grave to-day ? ”

At the risk of his future—at the risk of every personal interest he had at one time held so priceless—Ito, looking his wife full in the eyes, replied—

“ Yes, I loved her—loved her with all my heart and utmost being years before I ever saw your face—ay, and I loved her since, and wronged you by concealing it.”

Excelsior’s handsome face grew white to the lips, but she only grasped her husband’s hands the faster as she questioned—

“ Say, do you love her still ? ”

And Ito replied emphatically—

“ As she may hear and judge my answer, I love her still, and shall never cease to love her,

while I have a heart that beats, to the end of life—yes, and beyond all time ! Deal with me as you will ! ”

And then it was that the American girl showed the grain of loyalty so indigenous in the oak from which she was originally transplanted—oak that is for endurance as iron, and for fidelity like steel !

Very earnestly, still holding her husband's hands, she made him her reply.

“ I had straight away decided, Ito, if you had answered me with Japanese subtlety otherwise, that our divorce should be self-applied, and irrevocable. Love that white pearl, that spotless lily soul ? Yes, love her to the end, and beyond the end of time ! From this hour our marriage-tie is strengthened with an added strand. Say, Ito, we are more than man and wife—from henceforth we are pals ! Pals in our love for her, pals in—if need be—dying like her, if haply there be a hereafter where we can meet her once again ! ”

CHAPTER XXXVIII

JAPANESE SUNSHINE PENETRATES WEST AND DISPERSES A LONDON FOG

ONCE more we must revert to that London house in Piccadilly where the reader first saw Pauline Erskine at the beginning of this history.

The house is in Park Lane, and we find her again installed in her mother's home receiving a visitor, one whom all men speak of with respect as the eminent surgeon Lionel Trevor !

In spite of a thoroughly uncompromising and obstinate London fog, stifling the dull roar of the traffic without, and penetrating to the glowing hearth within, there was sunshine lighting the room—the sunshine of love triumphant.

“ To think the ‘ call ’ should have brought you back in my direction at last,” the manly voice of Lionel was exclaiming. “ Well, I will confess

you are only just in time, Pauline ; I was rapidly deteriorating, and becoming more and more reprobate, in proportion as your term of absence increased ! I always knew that in my own personality waited your most promising ' mission field,' and that some day you would wake to the fact and come and claim it ! And for that reason I never ' let it out to any other husband-man,' I mean, of course, wife-man."

" I am still utterly inadequate to the task," said Pauline, with a happy smile ; " but as you persist in offering it to me, you shall take the consequences ! "

" But how about those forsaken Japanese who still await ' conversion ' at your hands ? "

" Lionel, tease me no more about that much misconstrued word. I have been ' converted ' myself by one of them, and you owe it to her that I am here now."

" What a thrice blessed heathen ! " pronounced Lionel fervently.

" Be quiet, and listen. I do not go in for ' conversion ' any more now, Lionel."

“ Do you mean to say, then, that you will allow me to remain a castaway with a clear conscience ? ” he inquired rapturously.

“ Cannot you be serious for one moment ? Listen ! Try and realise the fact that I am a totally different person from the girl I was when I went out to Japan.”

“ The powers forbid ! ” he ejaculated, with mock solemnity.

Pauline went on, unheeding him—

“ It is true,” she asserted vehemently. “ I went out, crudely analytical, I have come back reverently synthetic ! ”

“ You alarm me,” said Lionel, with a comical grimace ; “ will you excuse me while I go to fetch a dictionary, or will you permit me to ascertain the condition of your temperature ? ” She laid a detaining hand on his arm, but did not vouchsafe a smile as she continued—

“ It is a fact, Lionel. I have learned a hard lesson far away in Japan, and I hope I shall be of more use in the world because of it. I have learned that it is not sudden conversion that is

necessary, but, rather, gradual growth from within. That is the only way in which the roots of conviction will strike deep, and hold firm afterwards."

"Does this mean that you are going to be very patient with an unconverted husband, sweetheart?"

"It means that we are both in need of this growth, I, perhaps, more than you, Lionel. It means that the highest saint can never get above the need of it, or the lowest sinner sink below; and it means," she added thoughtfully and reverently, "that it is even possible to grow on, though that may take many existences, till the stature of the Christ Himself is attained. The best of it all is, that we can do this under any religion in which our race and heredity have enrolled us!"

"Is that what Shintōism has taught you, Pauline?"

"Say, rather, it is what the study of one pure life, nurtured by the Shintō faith, has taught me, Lionel."

"Then, thank heaven your theology is slain,

Pauline, and the dust of its dry bones will not be thrown in my eyes any longer."

"Forgive the fanaticism of the past, when I thought myself wise because narrow, Lionel," she said softly. "There are countless theological bypaths devised by the brains of well-intentioned men, but I have learned that only the one which ignores them all, is the surest. This alone is, *Kami-no-Michi*—The Way of the Gods."

* * * * *

The years speed over Japan, each one a wing-heeled Mercury carrying to the West something of her ancient art and craft, and leaving her what she dubiously esteems a gain, in exchange.

From every European nation her people, ever adaptive, cull some self-advantage, and yet the national heart preserves in its recesses the pristine distrust of the foreigner and the self-complacency of race.

All honour be to Japan that she never sanctioned the slave trade, even in the days when China trafficked in the sale of human flesh.

New forms of religious belief are tested, put on, and cast aside, in common with European clothes, midst which the kimono still lingers.

The poisonous invasion of drink—that Goliath of Anglo vice—vitiates the good health and temper of the people, threatening to cost her that incomparable control of the emotions, engendered by her ancient Shintō teaching, which has been her grandest characteristic in the past.

Also, the consumption of dead flesh, which, while it fires the passions, weakens the physical constitution of the soldier to his cost.

The West, in penetrating into her Eden, has taught Japan that she is “naked,” and shown her false shame in many acts, where, primarily, no shame was. Despoiling her Eden, it has flung back to her only the discarded skins of vulgarised art with which to cover her wounds.

But even from the West, with inroad of much evil, came one form of good, the open recognition of respect for women !

It is rare now to see the Japanese wife meekly carrying burdens in the wake of her husband, or

being relegated by him to a third-class carriage, while he travels first, luxuriously. Men rise to offer seats in the cars, and the Western mode of outward respect towards women begins to prevail, whether from mere concession to the dictates of "better form," or from a worthier motive.

Japanese women, too, are commanding deference for themselves, by demonstrating more boldly their capacity to shine on an equality with men. This they are doing intellectually and physically, but whether these sweet women will retain their modesty and selflessness, are points that remain open for experience to decide.

Japan, too, is said to be improving as regards her "commercial honour," that is to say, she is learning our Western tactics of secretly defrauding her neighbour, instead of doing so by public and "religious" permission, as was for centuries the case. She is secretly hopeful of ousting the foreign trader when she has perfected herself in his methods, and driving him eventually from her shores.

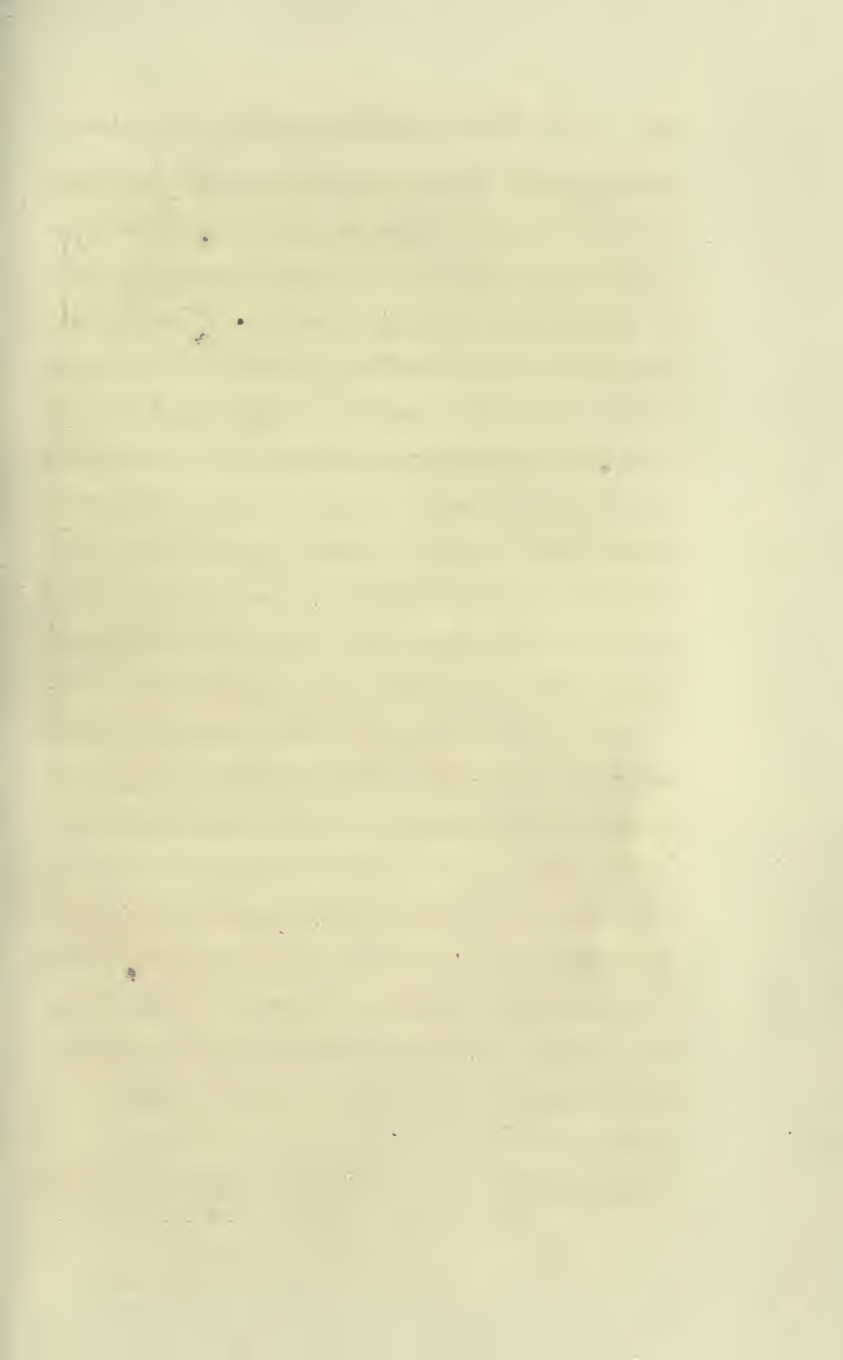
All this is true, and yet it is only by ceaseless

intermingling of conflicting issues that unity can be woven into the woof of international life.

So also can the great religions alone be drawn to clasp hands, and thus cease to mutilate and tear the heart-strings of humanity.

The primitive Shintō of Japan lies veiled from the uninitiated, like those exquisite symbols of flora and fauna that her skilled craftsmen delight in hiding in the bric-à-brac they make of cherry wood! You may purchase these articles, gaze at the wood composing them, and they will only remain dull wood to you; but if you polish them patiently according to the right method, submerged mysteries will astonish you by shining forth from their surface, and you will marvel at the creative art that so subtly secreted them from the profane gaze of the physical eye! In the same way the profoundest truths can afford to lie ignored, for the bitterest antagonism must fail to destroy them, nor can passing centuries sound their knell!

Meanwhile those petrified sentinels of rock





望遠士電谷大峯

OWAKIDAME, THE VALLEY OF THE GREAT BOILING.

still guard with upraised blades the heights of Haruna Temple—like gods who abide their time. Fuji-san, the honoured mountain, is as sacred as ever to the inner life of the people, as he alternately covers and discloses his inspiring ivory crest, while his antithesis, Asama-Yama, smokes and flames, as who should say, Beware my secret fires that pause but for command !

Hid in the depths of many a patient soul the ancient Way of the Gods is unforgotten ; the shrines of the households are daily tended, and a yearly welcome is ever prepared for the visits of the “ Dead ” !

A tidal wave has yet to flow with sufficient strength to displace the Amida Daibutsu of Kamakura, who in bygone generations witnessed the destruction of the city, and also that of his surrounding temples, with imperturbable equanimity ! ”

Still He reigns, in silent assurance of the eventual perfecting of Man, and the ultimate triumph of External, Internal, and Eternal Peace !

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